COMMODORE STEPHEN DECATUR

of the United States Navy.

# THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF STEPHEN DECATUR;

LATE

*COMMODORE AND POST-CAPTAIN*

IN THE

## NAVY OF THE UNITED STATES,

AND

## *NAVY-COMMISSIONER:*

INTERSPERSED WITH BRIEF NOTICES OF THE ORIGIN, PROGRESS, AND ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE AMERICAN NAVY.

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'OUR CHILDREN—THEY ARE THE PROPERTY OF OUR COUNTRY.'
Toast of Comm. Decatur's Father, 1804.

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BY S. PUTNAM WALDO, ESQ.
Compiler of "Robbins' Journal," author of the "President's Tour," "Memoirs of Jackson," &c. &c.

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TO THE

SECRETARY, COMMISSIONERS, OFFICERS,

AND SEAMEN,

OF THE

# NAVY OF THE UNITED STATES.

ACCOMPLISHED AND GALLANT MEN,

PERMIT an American Citizen, as a small tribute of admiration for your naval science, nautical skill, and gallant achievements, to offer this volume to you. He hopes to find a shield for its imperfections, in the frankness and candour of your characters. It would be the consummation of vanity to suppose that any efforts of his, could *elevate* the character of STEPHEN DECATUR in *your* estimation; and it is a real consolation to reflect that it cannot be *depressed* by the manner in which it is portrayed. The very brief and imperfect notices of the achievements of the American Navy, as connected with the Life and Character of Commodore Decatur, will be excused from the extreme brevity with which they are alluded to. The splendour of your achievements has given to the American Republic, an exalted rank through the Eastern World---the hopes of the Western Hemisphere are fixed upon the American Navy.

With undissembled respect,

I am your admiring fellow-citizen.

S. PUTNAM WALDO.

# TO THE READER.

THE splendid and unsurpassed achievements of the American Navy in the second war between the Republic and the British Empire, drew forth the undivided applause of Americans, and excited the deepest solicitude of Englishmen.

The author added his feeble *note* to the *harmonious concord* of approbation, and rapture, produced by our naval triumphs. Having for the past year, directed his researches to the earlier periods of our naval power, and in succession to this period, he had gathered materials for a "bird's eye view" of the Navy, and more copious ones for the Biography of STEPHEN DECATUR. The work was commenced some time previous to the disastrous event which terminated the brilliant career of that unsurpassed Naval Tactician, and gallant Ocean Warriour.

As he commenced his naval life with the commencement of the Navy, it became necessary to blend with the memoir, the most signal events of the naval warfare with the French Republic, although *he* then acted in a minor station.

In the expeditions to the Mediterranean, and the great achievements in that renowned sea, in the administration of Mr. JEFFERSON, Decatur was constantly in the van of our squadrons; and gallantly led in almost every daring and glorious achievement. It therefore became necessary to be somewhat minute in describing them. The materials from which his deeds and these achievements are detailed, are chiefly derived from *memoranda*

gathered by the writer for some years past, from the officers of the American Squadron, with some of whom, he has enjoyed the honour, the pleasure, and the instruction of some acquaintance. Of the authenticity of *their* modest, yet precise communications, not a moments doubt can be entertained. As no *quotations* are made from any publications extant, no references are made to them.

The *facts* and *incidents* of Commodore Decatur's more recent life, were derived from personal intercourse with gentlemen of the Navy--communications from obliging correspondents, and those invaluable publications "NILES' WEEKLY REGISTER" and the "ANALECTIC MAGAZINE," to which every American reader, and writer, are so essentially indebted, as repositories of the most important and interesting FACTS.

The writer is sensible that the great leading events of Decatur's Life, and of the American Navy, are familiar with many readers; but if by blending with them incidents not generally known, he has rendered *new things familiar*, and by his *manner* of detail he has rendered *familiar things new*, he will have accomplished the object of this volume.

The volume is offered to the reader, not "*with frigid indifference*" as to commendation or censure; and if the same indulgence is extended to this, as to the other hasty production of the writer, his gratification will be augmented.

THE AUTHOR.

HARTFORD, JANUARY 8, 1821.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

# LIFE AND CHARACTER

OF

# STEPHEN DECATUR, &c.

## CHAPTER I.

[INTRODUCTORY.]

Naval Heroes identified with Naval Glory—Commercial enterprise of Americans—British jealousy against American Colonies—First dawning of Naval Glory amongst Americans—Constellation of Ocean-Warriours—STEPHEN DECATUR.

STEPHEN DECATUR'S name and glory are so inseparably identified with that of the AMERICAN NAVY, that it is almost impossible to contemplate the high renown of the last, without associating with the exhilirating reflection, the splendid and unsurpassed achievements of the first. Decatur and the navy (if the figure is allowable) went on from infancy, hand in hand, supported and supporting—" growing with each others growth, and strengthening with each others strength," until they *both* acquired the dignified and noble attitude of manhood.

Until the auspicious era of *seventeen hundred and ninety eight*, Americans themselves scarcely knew that the Republic *had* a naval force, and in that memorable

year, STEPHEN DECATUR commenced his naval career. In the naval warfare with *France*, and it was nothing else but naval warfare, the glory of the infant American navy burst upon the world like the sun-beam through a dark and lowering cloud. This constituted the *first period* of the navy and of Decatur's naval life.

The warfare with the *Barbary* powers, especially with *Tripoli*, again called into action the decreasing energy of the American navy, and the increasing ardour of our naval officers and seamen. The glory of our navy, and the achievements of our officers resounded through the three great continents bordering upon the *Mediterranean*, the greatest and most renowned of seas. This constituted the *second period* of the navy. It commenced with the nineteenth century, and was the brilliant commencement of Decatur's renown.

The *second* war between the American Republic and the *British Empire*, formed the *third period* of our navy, and the rapid and splendid progression of Decatur's fame.

The short naval warfare with *Algiers* which immediately followed the conclusion of the war with Britain, presented Decatur to the world in the two-fold capacity of *Conquerour* and *Negociator*. It augmented the renown of the American navy—it was the complete consummation of his glory. As Navy Commissioner, he displayed the knowledge he had acquired in active service.

This rapid glance from the commencement to the termination of these imperfect Sketches, is made, to elucidate the reasons for the manner in which the work will be attempted. If a biographical memoir may be compared to a *perspective painting*, it will be the de-

sign of the writer to keep STEPHEN DECATUR upon the *fore-ground*, and in the *relief*, to present slight *views* of the "*origin, progress and achievements of the American navy.*" Whether the *delineations* will be correct, and the *lights* and *shades* judicious, must of course be left to the plain, unostentatious observer, and to the acute, fastidious, and acrimonious *connoisseur*. However grateful approbation might be to the writer, he is fully determined not to be carried to any high degree of elevation by commendation, nor sunk to the least degree of dejection by censure. As he is confident he cannot give entire satisfaction to himself, he has little hope of imparting it to the reader.

The thirst for NAVAL GLORY, unconnected with the rapid accumulation of wealth, could hardly be said to constitute a prominent feature of the American character, until system and order was introduced into the American navy, during the administrations of the venerable JOHN ADAMS and THOMAS JEFFERSON. A spirit of commercial enterprise, without a parallel amongst ancient or modern nations, had indeed, for a long period before, rendered America the second nation in the world, in point of commercial importance. But this was the result of *individual exertion* and not of *national patronage*. The ocean, the great natural highway of nations, invited Americans to whiten its bosom with their canvass. Even before the British crown began to encroach upon the rights of its American colonies, the thousands of American merchant ships were navigating every sea. The productions of every clime, from China to California, were poured into the lap of the rising colonies. The hardy and intrepid seamen of America were seen in every ocean. They were seen

amidst the terrifying waves of the North, encountering the tremendous whale, whose evolutions and spoutings would seem to appal the stoutest heart. Even a distinguished British admiral, who, for *amusement*, had joined an American whaling party, was lost in astonishment at the adventurous spirit of American seamen, and lost his fortitude in the threatening danger that surrounded him.

American seamen were also seen, enduring the blasting rays of an equinoctial sun, and bearing home to their country all the varied productions of the tropical regions. Wherever a ship *could* navigate oceans, our energetic and dauntless navigators led the van in navigating enterprise. It is readily acknowledged that at this early period of the history of our country in its rapid progress to national glory, our merchants and seamen thought of little else than the rapid accumulation of wealth. But let it never be forgotten, that our countrymen, by these pursuits, were adding *practical knowledge*, to the *theory of navigation*—fearless intrepidity, to scientific acquirements.

The British nation, for a long period before its deadly jealousy commenced a systematic oppression o its American children, was the almost undisputed mistress of the ocean. She claimed that she had wrested the trident of Neptune from his hands, and that the four continents ought to be tributary to her wealth and power. That government, ever watchful of national glory, and as its handmaid, ever insatiable in amassing national wealth, looked with a suspicious eye upon the American colonies, although they constituted the most brilliant gem in the British diadem. When the infat-

uated policy of Britain drove them into a contest with the mother-country, every thing considered, the most powerful nation in the world, the *confederated states* had not a single armed vessel floating upon the ocean. But they had the most accomplished navigators, and the most intrepid seamen. It was however, no time to *commence* the establishment of a *naval force*. The country and its resources, were literally in possession of its implacable enemy, when that tremendous and awfully unequal contest commenced which terminated in the most glorious revolution of the eighteenth century.

But, during the sanguinary progress of the revolutionary struggle, the latent sparks of that blaze of glory which now envelopes the AMERICAN NAVY, elicited themselves with the most cheering brilliancy. It was not that systematic, regulated courage, which for the last quarter of a century has led our naval heroes to *certain* victory. It was not the majestic course which now marks our ships and our fleets, as the orbits point out the course of the planets—it was rather like the comet, whose eccentric course and flaming face defy calculation, excite wonder and raise fear.

Would the limits and the design of this work permit, I might carry the reader along through the whole gloomy period of the revolutionary struggle, and show, that with means apparently wholly inefficient, the *naval spirit* of Americans, evinced itself in a manner calculated to excite the unbounded admiration of their friends, and the fearful apprehensions of their enemies. But it must not here be omitted that the "Old Congress" took measures as early as 1776, to establish a *naval force*, when the resources of the country were

next to nothing. With a few little ships, which grew up, as if by magic, and which *seemed* like rude intruders upon the ocean, a *Barry*, a *Manly*, a *Biddle*, a *Jones*, and a *Preble*, spread consternation amongst the enemy, and for themselves acquired fame, lasting as immortality. Particulars must here be omitted; but the inquisitive reader may readily find them in the publications of that period.

We approach now toward that auspicious epoch in the history of the American Republic, when the Grand Council of the nation literally *began* the navy of the Republic—for there was not, twenty-five years ago, a single vestige remaining of the naval force commenced in the war of the Revolution. It was in *this* navy, that the brilliant constellation of gallant ocean heroes arose with a splendour that illumines the modern history of the Republic.

In the midst of this constellation, STEPHEN DECATUR shines with resplendant glory,—a star of the first magnitude. To delineate *his* life and character, it is readily admitted requires the hand of a master. The writer approaches the task with a trembling solicitude, most sensibly felt, but wholly indescribable. Relying, however, upon that indulgence and candour, which has given to his "MEMOIRS" of one of the first ornaments of the ARMY of the Republic* a favourable reception, he will endeavour to present his countrymen a faithful and accurate portrait of one who was the first ornament of the American NAVY.

* Gen. Andrew Jackson.

# CHAPTER II.

Decatur's birth—Birth-places—Difference between *beginning* and *ending* great names—Brief notice of Decatur's ancestors—His father, one of the original Post-Captains in the American Navy—Dedication of his sons to the Republic—The inestimable value of the Legacy.

STEPHEN DECATUR, who, from the humble birth of a Midshipman, rose to the highest grade of office yet established in the Navy of the American Republic, was born upon the Eastern Shore of Maryland, Worcester county, upon the 5th day of January, A. D. 1779.

Although to the general scholar, the precise time, and the certain place where a distinguished man was born, or educated, or where he first exemplified indications of his future greatness, seem to be of but little importance, yet these points have been contested with such an unyielding stubbornness by the ancient and modern *literati*, that they assume a *factitious* consequence, which, *intrinsically* seems not to belong to them.

A place that derives *all* its consequence from the birth of one great man, who first inhaled air in it, may well contend for that frail claim to local honour—frail it well may be called; for surely it cannot be perceived how the birth of a great man, who has secured a title to lasting fame by his *own* science, genius, or heroism, can impart fame to the *place* of his nativity,

any more than the glory of a man's *ancestors* can immortalize his *descendants*. But every traveller must visit the place of a great man's birth, however obscure it may be.

No country upon earth, within the period of the two last centuries, which limits the age of *civilized* America, can boast of a more extended catalogue of great men in the State, the Church, the Army, the Navy, and in the walks of Literature and Science, than ours. But when we come to trace their places of birth; the seminaries where they obtained the rudiments of knowledge, or completed their education, and the ancestors to whom they trace their origin, it will be found that a very great proportion of the most distinguished men of our Republic, came into existence in some of the most obscure villages of our *new* country—were educated in the most humble schools, and can trace their genealogy to some of the most obscure citizens of our Republic.

It is usual with the writers of Biography to give, sometimes a brief, and oftentimes a prolix sketch of the ancestors of the subject of his memoirs. This may serve to eke out a volume; and, for want of interesting incidents in the life of the subject of it, he may interlard it with matter wholly extraneous. It may serve another purpose—it may gratify the pride of family aristocracy, who exhibit the archives of their ancestors as evidence of their own merit, and by the aid of heraldry, display splendid coats of arms in the family hall. It is almost enough to excite the admiration of an English reader to be told that *some* of the blood of the *Tu-*

*dors* or *Stuarts** is coursing sluggishly through the veins of the modern hero of a memoir; and although the present *legitimate princes* of the British empire have but little *legitimate blood* amongst their subjects, it would undoubtedly be highly gratifying to learn that he can claim consanguinity, or even some affinity with the *house of Brunswick*.†

The American reader, however much he may desire it, can seldom be gratified, in tracing a lengthened genealogy of his distinguished countrymen. It may well be doubted whether any of the original European inhabitants of *Maryland*, the native, and *Pennsylvania*, the adopted state of Decatur, or indeed of any other of the ancient colonies, even thought of bringing across the Atlantic, any family archives, or any evidence of family ancestry. Ardent in the pursuit of civil and religious liberty, they little cared about proving their descent from an arbitrary royal family, or a degenerated nobility who had deprived them of both. Indeed, it may be doubted whether our ancestors *had* any noble blood, excepting *that noble blood* which rouses all true Americans, and Englishmen too, to revolt at civil and ecclesiastical tyranny. Our ancestors were not amongst the favourites of the courts of the *Charleses*, the *Jameses* or the *Georges*;—they generally consisted of the highest and best informed class of the sturdy yeomanry, who chose rather to encounter the dangers of the ocean, and all the appalling horrours of Indian warfare, than to submit to the abused prerogative of a crown, or the arrogance

*Ancient reigning families in England.

† The present reigning family in the British Empire.

of an insolent high church priesthood. They came here to *begin a Republic*, and to *begin their own names:* and surely it is far more gratifying to see a new-born republic, rising in strong majesty, than to behold ancient empires and kingdoms tottering to their fall. It is also infinitely more gratifying to behold the present generation of Americans *beginning* names for themselves, than to see them *ending* those that were rendered illustrious by their ancestors.

These hasty remarks are not made with a view of extirpating from the breast that noble sentiment which induces the descendants of great Statesmen, Heroes, and Scholars, to cherish, venerate and defend the fame of their ancestors; but to impress the idea thus forcibly expressed by one of the master painters of human nature;—

> "The deeds of long descended *ancestors*,
> Are but by *grace of imputation ours*."

The reader may be led to suppose from the preceding remarks, that Decatur was of the humblest origin, and that the obscurity of his family is about to be mentioned in order to increase the lustre of his own achievements. Not so,—the object was to impress upon the mind of the youthful reader, a sentiment which ought to be unceasingly reiterated through the Republic, that the principle of *family aristocracy*, prostrates the very genius of our constitution. The rising youth of America should scorn to repose in listless inactivity,—riot in the wealth, or bask in the fame of their ancestors. Nothing but personal merit, and deeds of *actual* renown, entitles a man to be enrolled with worthies, or hold a niche in the temple of fame.

How ignoble would STEPHEN and JAMES DECATUR have appeared, if, instead of devoting themselves to their country, and achieving deeds of glory as the foundation of *their own* fame, they had supinely reposed upon the high rank and reputation of their gallant father?

The family of Decatur was of French extraction in the paternal line—upon the maternal side, it was of Irish extraction. Could it be indulged in a biographical memoir, what a capacious field is here opened to "expatiate free" upon the prominent characteristics of Frenchmen and Irishmen? We might paint the chivalrous gallantry of the one, and the ardent and romantic courage of the other—we can only say, they both were most happily and gloriously united in Stephen Decatur—under the name of an American.

His grandfather was a native of La Rochelle, in France, celebrated for the refinement and taste which prevails in the large cities of that captivating and charming country. Although amongst the early emigrants from European nations, Frenchmen included but a small proportion, many of the most distinguished men of the middle and southern states can trace their origin to that people. The same cause that drove Englishmen, Scotsmen, Irishmen, Germans, &c. to the New World—civil and ecclesiastical oppression, also compelled some of the persecuted **Hugonots* in France, to seek an asylum in America, which has most emphatically been denominated "*The asylum of oppressed humanity.*" What were the motives of Decatur's an-

* Vide, the pathetic accounts of the sanguinary persecution of the Hugonots by the Papal power.

cestors to emigrate, is lost in the oblivious shade that is spread over that interesting period of our history. He landed in Rhode Island, a state which owes its existence to an high sense of religious liberty.

Having soon discovered the excellence of a government where freedom of thought, freedom of speech and freedom of the press had dissipated the monkish gloom and sullen terror which enveloped and chained the human mind in the regions where a subtil, aspiring, corrupt, and detestable priesthood held dominion, he relinquished all idea of returning to his native land—married a lady of Rhode Island, and settled at Newport, situated upon the most charming island bordering upon the American continent.

It was here that Stephen Decatur, the father of our hero was born. What were the pecuniary circumstances of this family, at this period is unknown to the writer, and is of but little consequence to the reader. That adventurous spirit, which characterises the name of Decatur, induced him, in early life, to remove to the city of Philadelphia, the metropolis of the then American colonies. Having previously become acquainted, and enamoured with the ocean, he resorted to that element as the theatre of his exertions, his fortune and his fame.

From what has previously been said, the reader will not here expect a biographical notice of the distinguished father of the subject of these Sketches. His life deserves the record of a much abler hand than that which is now attempting to portray that of his gallant and illustrious son. A mere miniature will only be attempted. He entered into the matrimonial state

early in life before the fine feeling of an affectionate heart had been cooled by intercourse with a deceitful, friendless, and cruel world. His bosom companion was the daughter of an Irish gentleman by the name of Pine. Having been previously instructed in the theory of navigation, he commenced his nautical life in the merchants' service at that auspicious period when commercial enterprize was the sure passport to sudden wealth. But its fascinating charms had no attractions for the elder Stephen Decatur, when put in competition with naval glory. No sooner had our infant navy embraced the ocean, than his ardent spirit led him, amongst the very first of the naval heroes of 1798, to tender his services to his country. Let it be remembered that at that period, the Republic had no commanders who had distinguished themselves—America was not even ranked with naval powers. It therefore required a devotion to country which must border upon the romantic, to engage in a service apparently so pregnant with difficulty and hazard.

Notwithstanding the blaze of glory which *now* encircles our naval officers, it is no more than justice to the *first* class of naval commanders to say that they share equally in the glory acquired for the Republic by our naval achievements. They were the first *teachers* of that admirable system—that inimitable discipline,—that unequalled police which has ever distinguished the American navy. Ask the gallant ocean warriours of the second war between the Republic and the British Empire, where they acquired that unparalleled nautical skill which is as necessary as dauntless courage—and they will refer you to the school of Trux-

TON, the senior DECATUR, and his cotemporaries; and afterwards to PREBLE and his coadjutors.

The elder Decatur was first appointed to the command of the Delaware sloop of war, and continued in the same command, until the patriotic merchants of Philadelphia presented to their country a noble frigate named after that noble city. It may almost be said that she was built for the *Decaturs*, for she was first commanded by the father in the naval warfare with France, who lived to see her destroyed by the son, when in the hands of a Tripolitan Bashaw. He continued in the command of the Philadelphia, teaching his gallant crew the path to certain victory, and protecting American commerce from French depredations. At the conclusion of peace with France he resigned his command, and retired to the bosom of his beloved family near the city of Philadelphia. Here this veteran son of Neptune beheld from year to year the rising glory of the navy—and, what consummated his temporal felicity, the fame of his beloved sons, Stephen and James. Sitting between them at a public naval dinner, a few years before his death, he was congratulated by some of the guests upon the happiness he enjoyed in his family. Turning his animated eyes, alternately toward his two sons, and uttering forth the sentiments of his noble and patriotic heart he exclaimed,——"OUR CHILDREN—THEY ARE THE PROPERTY OF OUR COUNTRY,"——a sentiment that would have done honour to the *Decii* of Rome, and which led *them* to die for the Republic. The eyes of his sons beamed with the ardour of filial affection—their hearts swelled with patriotism—the guests were electrified with joy. The noble veteran

retired from a scene almost too joyous to be endured. He lived to lament the death of his son James—ended his active and patriotic labours in the year 1808, and closed a life which rendered him lamented and honoured in death.

Thus much, and thus only, can *here* be said of the life of the father of Stephen Decatur. He sleeps with the great and good men who have shed a lustre upon the history of the Republic. His memory will be cherished and held in fond remembrance by our countrymen, as well for his own exalted worth, as for the inestimable legacy he left his country in giving it two sons who emulated his virtues—pursued the path *he* pointed out to fame—clothed themselves with laurels of unfading splendour, and essentially advanced the glory of the American Republic.

The reader is now, asked for awhile to withdraw his attention from the beloved and cherished name of the Decators, and follow the writer while he attempts, imperfectly, to give a brief view of the origin and progress of the American Navy until that period when STEPHEN DECATUR, the leading subject of these Sketches, entered into the service of his country as a Midshipman. From *that* period, to the day of his death, his biography must *necessarily* be blended with brief notices of the progress and achievements of our navy. His spirit seemed to be infused into every breast that was led upon the mighty deep in our conquering ships. He seemed to be the genius of Victory, hovering over our floating bulwarks, and shedding its radiance even in the hour of disaster.

# CHAPTER III.

Extinction of Naval Power and Naval Spirit at the close of the Revolution—A Seventy-four presented to Louis XVI.—Conjecture concerning her—Astonishing effects of NAVAL POWER—Encroachments upon American Commerce and humiliation of American Seamen—Act of Congress 1794 for building six Frigates—Enthusiasm excited by it—Frigate Constitution—Achievements of Truxton, Little &c.—Anecdotes of the elder Decatur and Tryon—Midshipman Stephen Decatur.

When the war of the Revolution ended in the acknowledgment of American Independence, the civil fathers of the Republic had a duty no less arduous to perform in the Cabinet, than her gallant army had achieved and just concluded in the field. It would be but repeating, what the writer attempted to remark upon this subject in another publication*—it is therefore introduced in this place.

"Destitute of a government of their own making, they had before them the lights of antiquity, and the practical knowledge of modern ages. With the scrutinizing research of statesmen, and the calm deliberation of philosophers, they proceeded to establish a constitution of Civil Government, as the supreme law of the land. The establishment of this Constitution is, perhaps, without a parallel in the history of the civilized world. It was not the unresisted mandate of a successful usurper, nor was it a government imposed

* Vide Memoirs of Jackson, p. 13, 5th edition.

upon the people by a victorious army. It was digested by profound statesmen, who aimed to secure all the rights of the people who had acquired them, by their toil, their courage, and their patriotism. They aimed also to give to the government, sufficient energy to command respect.

To the *people* of the American Republic, a constitution was presented for *their* deliberation, and for *their* adoption. It was adopted, not with entire unanimity, but by a majority of the people, sufficiently respectable to give its operation a promising commencement. The people, having emancipated themselves from the power of a British monarch—having successfully resisted his lords and his commons, looked with jealousy upon those who were called to the exercise of the power which they had themselves delegated to their own countrymen. The excellency of the constitution was tested by the practical application of its principles ; and the patriotism nnd integrity, of all the early officers who derived their power from it, were acknowledged by their admiring countrymen."

These great statesmen were called upon, not to *direct* the resources of the country, for resources she had none : they were called upon to *create* them, and then apply them to the proper objects. So far as national power, depends upon national wealth, the confederated states were as feeble as a reed shaken by the wind. Involved in debt without a treasury—the veteran soldiers of the revolution yet bleeding, and their toils unrewarded—the commerce of the country almost swept from the ocean, by the ruthless carnage of a Vandal foe—our country depredated and cities

burned, all, all presented to the eye and to the imagination of our ancestors a dreary and outspread scene of desolation.

At the conclusion of the revolutionary struggle, the few little ships that had performed such romantic, and chivalrous deeds of noble daring, were converted into merchantmen. At this period, a single Seventy-four had been built and fitted for sea, designed for that prodigy of a man, Paul Jones, previously mentioned. A line of battle ship in the navy of France, having been wrecked upon the American coast, our grateful forefathers, as one acknowledgement to Louis XVI. the only crowned head in Europe who ever looked upon America except with an eye of jealousy or fear, presented this ship to that best and most unfortunate of the Bourbons.

It is left to vague and undefined conjecture, what results would have been produced had *this* ship of the line been retained by our government. That unsatisfied cupidity, that insatiable thirst for wealth, which like the daughters of the horse-leach, continually cry, "*give, give*" and which pervaded so completely the bosoms of Americans at this period, *might* have suffered her to moulder away in our waters, and never have hoisted the "star spangled banner" upon her mast. If the writer may be permitted to conjecture for himself, he would express an opinion diametrically opposite. Some rising and ardent Decatur of that period, would have sought for the command of her—he would have made her the floating *seminary* for the *instruction* of American seamen, in naval tactics,—frigates and sloops of war would have grown up around her, as a

rallying point; and the first spoliation upon our rapidly increasing commerce would have met with a prompt and vindictive chastisement.

But American commerce was left to the fate, doomed to be inflicted upon it by the belligerent powers of Europe. Yes, the same powers, which, toward the close of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, preyed upon our merchants with fearless impunity, now, at nearly the close of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, dare not pollute the deck of the humblest American craft that ploughs the ocern.

But it was necessary for American statesmen in the dawn of our national greatness, as it is now, when it is rising toward its meridian splendour, to conform their measures to the actual state of the country. It is wholly in vain to attempt to force a free and intelligent people into the adoption of measures which they cannot approve without surrendering the physical power they possess, and cannot execute without a sacrifice of ther real or supposed interests. When our ancestors first began to recover from the convulsive shock of the revolution, they little thought of providing defence against future invasions of our rights upon our acknowledged territory, or upon the ocean, the great highway of all nations. Having thoroughly learned the evils of a large standing army, in time of peace, they reluctantly retained the scanty pittance of a military force, scarcely sufficient to supply the few garrisons then scattered over our immense country.

But *naval power* and naval men is what is embraced in the object of this work. It would be a theme upon which we might expatiate with all the rapture of in-

creasing delight to trace the origin and progress of that tremendous and resistless power which ancient and modern nations have created for themselves upon the ocean. From the ancient Carthage, to England, which has not inaptly been called the modern Carthage, we might show how nations small in territory and population,—without the means of extending dominion, and scarcely able to protect themselves by land defences, have rolled on from conquest to conquest, and made immense empires bow and become tributary to the wooden walls of naval prowess. How came Holland once, and England now, to wield the sceptre of power in the East and in the West Indies, and fill their coffers with their treasure ?—by their *naval power*. How came Spain, in the reign of Philip, to menace, and all but conquer England herself, in the reign of Elizabeth ?—by her *naval power*. It was the elements that defeated the Spanish *armada*, on the coast of England, as Nelson, in a single day conquered France and Spain at Trafalgar.* How has it come to pass that the best portions of Asia have lost their ancient dominion, and are now colonies of European nations ?—By *naval power*. Pages might be swelled with this "swelling theme." But, rapidly to anticipate what will hereafter be more minutely noticed. What preserved the immense territory of the *West* from the desolations of a Vandal army which

* A very humorous poem of this period makes Admiral Villeneuve thus express himself :—

"So now, mes sages sirs, we must give up de notion,
And let England peaceably govern de ocean,
As old Neptune wont grant us the rule of de sea,
He may give his damn'd pitchfork to Nelson for me."

seemed to be irresistible, in the second war with Britain? The naval power upon Lake Erie. What protected the wide and wealthy regions of the North, in the same war, from the ravages of an insatiable foe? The *naval power* upon Lake Champlain. And to fill the climax, to do justice to which would require "*a muse of fire to ascend the highest heaven of invention*," what made the cross of St. George and the Turkish Crescent bow to American prowess?—The *naval power*.

The profound sagacity, and wary policy of American Statesmen, who sat the intricate machine of government in operation under our Republican Constitution, well understood the overwhelming bankruptcy in which the British empire was sinking, or rather sunk, by her immense naval force. They sought to bestow upon their beloved Republic *richer* blessings than the blessing of *national debt*. No human sagacity, however, could, at that time, foresee that American *commerce* would soon become the direct road to sudden *national wealth*, although they must have known that an extended commerce could not long be *protected*, without a naval force, nor a naval force be *supported* without commerce. England, the imperious, and then undisputed mistress of the ocean, wielding the trident of Neptune over every sea, beheld American canvass in every latitude. Her jealousy was roused. Her armed ships *searched* our vessels for "contraband goods," *impressed* our seamen, and immured them in their "floating dungeons." Other petty naval powers, whose power on the ocean is now merged with that of Britain, the naval dictator of, because the most powerful nation in, Europe, followed her example of aggres-

sion, as feeble whappets follow in the train of a ferocious mastiff. The pride of American seamen, arising from the national glory of America acquired in the glorious revolution, was compelled to succumb to the mandate of every puny whipster who could shew a gun upon his deck. It was not voluntary submission, but submission "*ex necessitate rei*,"—the necessity of the case,—a most painful necessity.

The national resources had been almost exclusively derived from individual wealth—and that wealth had for years been committed to the ocean as the road to immediate wealth. Other nations, which were contending for dominion upon land and upon water, for a considerable period, lost sight of the advancing wealth, and, as a consequence, national power of the American Republic. Contending for crowns which sat loosely upon the fearful heads that sustained their ponderous weight, and dreading to see them fall, these nations, although contending with each other, seemed to *unite* in trying to blast the growing power of America.

The Barbary powers, whose corsairs hovered over that portion of the ocean where some part of our enterprising merchantmen were pursuing their lucrative business, plundered their vessels, and made slaves of their crews. The greater commercial nations, with more power, and also with more humanity, endeavoured to extirpate American commerce, and check the rapid progress of American wealth. They possessed *naval power*, of which our Republic was then destitute. Our patriotic rulers, as soon as they found our country in possession of the means adequate to the hard task of

supporting our *natural* rights upon the ocean, began to devise "ways and means" to do it.

It would require more pages than the limits of this volume will admit, to epitomatize the diversified arguments resorted to by the most eminent of American statesmen, in favor of, and against an efficient *naval power*. Some of them looked upon the "thousand armed ships" of England and despaired. They saw also the Russian, French, Spanish, and Danish fleets and dismissed all hopes of ever coping with *any* naval power. But WASHINGTON was still alive; and guiding the high destinies of our Republic in peace, as he had done in the war of the Revolution. His prescience readily suggested to his great mind the indispensible necessity of a naval force to protect our extensive and extending commerce. Negociation, to be sure, had obtained some indemnification for spoliations upon it; but the most successful negociations have always been made at the mouth of the cannon. Our rulers could no longer endure the thought, that our citizens, who had sought an "home upon the deep," should become victims to every prince who could send out a few cruisers, with a rapacious crew. They were determined that American citizens, pursuing a lawful commerce upon the ocean, should, as they ought, be protected there, as others pursuing lawful business on land. This was not the gasconading threat of a nurse who only brandishes the rod before the eyes of a truant child, without daring to strike; it was the decisive language of a parent, having a right to command, and power sufficient to enforce his decrees.

The year 1794, the auspicious period which laid

the foundation of our naval power, ought to be commemorated with equal enthusiasm as that of 1776, which made the declaration and laid the foundation for American Independence. The first hull of a frigate that was laid by our government, was the key-stone to the triumphant arch of American glory. If fancy might be indulged upon a subject which needs not its fictitious aid, we might see Neptune approaching our shores, and surrendering his trident to the banners of Columbia, when the first American frigate was launched into the bosom of the deep. The writer, then a boy, may hope to be indulged for expressing now the enthusiasm he *felt*, when he beheld the frigate CONSTITUTION launched from a Boston ship-yard. This untutored enthusiasm was occasioned, not by knowing then, the immeasurable power of a navy, but from the immense assemblage of animated citizens who witnessed the animating scene. They *might* have exclaimed—"There is one of our protectors upon the ocean—while she swims, she will not only protect our individual wealth, but she will manfully sustain our national rights upon the waves." What might have then been prophesy, is now history.

Proceeding with that caution and judgment which *must* mark the course of *our* rulers, they authorised the building of only four frigates of forty-four guns, and two of thirty-six. The amount of the force, was infinitely of less importance than the recognition of the principle, that a naval force was necessary for the protection of our territory and our commerce. The elder Stephen Decatur was amongst the first Post-Captains who were appointed to command our infant navy.

An opportunity was offered in the short war which occurred in the administration of Adams, between America and France, to call into operation our naval force. Indeed that war was nothing but naval warfare.

It is readily admitted that the achievements of single ships or fleets, in the bloody and desperate contests which invariably follow upon the meeting of forces nearly equal, sheds a lustre upon the officers and seamen, and even upon the *names* of the vessels engaged in them, which is seldom awarded to the less brilliant, although no less valuable protection which is afforded to merchant vessels by public armed ships. The American navy was commenced for the purpose of extending protection to American commerce, and not to encroach upon commercial rights upon the ocean. But when naval warfare became necessary to accomplish the great objects of our administration in establishing a navy, our early Post-Captains did not shrink from what was then deemed a doubtful contest.

The achievements of the gallant and skilful TRUXTON and LITTLE *ought* never to be forgotten, although their splendid victories in the war of 1798 with France have almost been buried in oblivion, in the splendour of the victories acquired by the *pupils* of the first list of our naval commanders; yet, when Americans cease to hold their early deeds in our naval history in fond remembrance, they will forget the first victory upon the ocean, which stimulated American youth to search for fame upon that element. The eulogy of Truxton is not so often to be found in the records of corporation dinners—votes of thanks—presentation of swords, and the assemblages of an admiring populace, as those of his

gallant followers in naval warfare who so richly deserved every honour and reward which a grateful and protected country have bestowed upon them. But Americans could not *then* duly appreciate the value and importance of naval protection, and as to the ingratitude of Republics it has become proverbial.

When Truxton in the Constellation compelled the superior French frigate Insurgente to strike her flag, the naval power of the French empire almost vanished, and that of America commenced. When he maintained a contest with a line of battle ship, through a long night-battle, and compelled her to seek for safety by flight, her commander not then knowing his antagonist, declared, that "he must have been an American; for no other people on earth could load so rapidly,—fire so accurately,—and fight so desperately."

The elder Decatur, in the mean time, with his gallant associates in the several ships under their command, were sweeping marauding picaroons from the ocean, and convoying our richly laden merchantmen to their destined ports. Besides the immense amount of individual property thus saved to the owners, the revenue alone arising to the government from this source, amounted to a sum greater than the whole expense of building and supporting the navy, up to that period. If this fact does not appeal to the lovers of national glory, it surely must to the worshippers of individual and national wealth.

However rapidly we wish to glide over this subject, and trace the younger Decatur in his career of naval glory, we ought again to pause and offer up a tribute of undissembled admiration to the *old* veteran ocean-war-

riours, who amidst perils that would seem to appal the very Genius of Victory herself, pointed out the path to America that so shortly has led her almost to the zenith of national greatness. The world at that time was literally girdled with floating batteries, and all seemed to be pointed at our immense commerce and our humble navy. Nelson declared that in this little germ of naval power he saw the future rival of Britain. Pride, and fear, and avarice, all conspired to wish and attempt an extermination of our gallant infant navy. Even at this period, although at peace with England, and fighting our worst enemy, an insolent admiral, commanded the gallant and vigilant Tryon of Connecticut, and then commanding the ship Connecticut to "come under his lee" as a token of submission, or an acknowledgment of inferiority. He instantly cleared his ship for action, and ordered all hands to quarters. The admiral sent an officer on board to know whether the order was heard, and if so, why it was not obeyed. "It was heard" said Capt. Tryon, "and the reason why it was not obeyed, you readily perceive, is, that all my hands are at quarters, ready to defend this ship." Either fear or admiration prevented a repetition of the order, and the little ship rode on the windward side of the admiral with her peak up, and her banners waving.

In the first cruise the elder Decatur made in the frigate Philadelphia, he found she did not sail so swift as he wished. As she was approaching toward her station, she was descried at a distance by Capt. Tryon bearing toward him. Owing to thick weather, or some other cause the Captain did not discover the character of his approaching visitor, and cleared ship for action. His

officers and crew were elated at the prospect of a *tete a tete* with some Monsieur Capitaine. They were deprived of that pleasure and enjoyed that of welcoming upon the station the noble *Philadelphia* frigate. After exchanging the usual civilities Commodore Decatur asked Captain Tryon "if his ship was a good sailer?" —"She will sail with *French picaroons*" said Captain Tryon, "but I do not know how she would sail with the *frigate Philadelphia*."—"Are you disposed to try it?" asked the Commodore. "If you please, sir," was the answer. The sailing-match was had; and in the specified time, the little ship *Connecticut* run the Philadelphia "hull down" twice. The next day Captain Tryon and his officers partook of a splendid dinner on board the Philadelphia, when Commodore Decatur jocosely said, "I'll exchange ships with you Captain Tryon."—The younger Decatur at this time was serving as Midshipman in the frigate United States; and little thought he should one day destroy his father's ship in the harbour of Tripoli.

Innumerable instances might be mentioned to show the veteran firmness of the American post-captains and seamen of that day. Thank heaven the spirits of these men survive in their successors, and, in allusion to them we may exclaim,—"*Amor patriæ vires acquiret eundo.*"—The love of country augments its strength as it advances.

# CHAPTER IV.

Stephen Decatur's early education—Peculiar advantages enjoyed by him—Enters the frigate United States as Midshipman 1798—Promoted to Lieutenant—Cruises in the West Indies against the French—Enters the brig Norfolk as 1st Lieutenant 1799—sails to the Spanish Main—Re-enters frigate United States—Barbarism of French and Spanish to American Seamen—Victories of Truxton, Little, &c.—Humiliation of the French—Peace with France—Rewards for heroism.

Although Stephen Decatur came into existence on the shores of the Chesapeake in Maryland, yet he can hardly be said to be a native of that state. The residence of his parents for years before his birth, had been in the city of Philadelphia—and they only left it as many distinguished citizens had done in consequence of the possession of that important place by the British forces in the war of the revolution. Upon evacuating it, Decatur's parents returned to their former residence there when he was but three months old.

In this noble city, which has with much propriety been called the "Athens of Columbia," Decatur was reared, educated, and prepared for the important and splendid scenes through which he was afterwards to pass. A more eligible situation to acquire an accomplished education, and dignified deportment, and that ardent spirit of emulation which stimulates noble minds to noble deeds, can hardly be imagined than that enjoyed by young Decatur. His father held the first rank amongst experienced navigators, and his house of course

would be the resort of men the most enterprising and adventurous. The reader can almost now through the "mind's eye" behold Stephen and James, suspending for awhile their literary studies, and rapturously listening to the narrations of their father, as he occasionally returned from the bosom of the boisterous ocean to that of his tranquil family. It would naturally direct their attention to that reading which described ancient and modern achievements upon the sea. In addition to the advantages afforded by the best libraries and accomplished instructors, these aspiring youths, who may be called the *Decatii*, had often under their eyes, and of course under their admiration, many of the surviving veterans of the Revolution. After their "*young ideas had been taught to shoot*," and their expanded intellects began to dawn, they were amidst that body of wonderful and profound statesmen who commenced the gigantic labour of beginning the Republic under the Constitution in 1789. They beheld the majestic form of WASHINGTON presiding with awful solemnity over the anxious councils of the nation. They witnessed the rewards and the honours *then* bestowed upon those whose wounds and scars were received in the great struggle for American Independence. They learned from time to time the encroachments made upon our commerce; and they must have heard much of that debate, than which, a more important one never occupied the deliberations of our civil fathers :--"SHALL THE REPUBLIC HAVE, OR SHALL SHE NOT HAVE A NAVY." They witnessed, and participated in the rapture which pervaded all the great commercial towns in our country, when the first keels of our armed ships were laid.

Passing over numerous interesting incidents in the early education of *these youths* (for they cannot *yet* be separated) at the ages of fifteen and seventeen their whole views were directed towards the navy, and their studies calculated to prepare them for the duties of naval stations.

At the earliest organization of the navy, their father, as previously mentioned, was appointed first to the command of a sloop of war, and soon after to that of the Philadelphia frigate. His sons, stimulated to enthusiasm by his example, soon after followed it,—and followed him in pursuit of naval fame. It is not known to me in what ship nor under what commander James first sailed; and he can no more be mentioned in these Sketches until his tragical death, avenged by Stephen with an heroism unexampled, must be alluded to.

Commodore Barry, one of the earliest Post-Captains in the American navy, obtained for Stephen Decatur, the warrant of a Midshipman in 1798, and he immediately entered on board the frigate United States, then commanded by that accomplished, although since too much forgotten officer.

It was on board this noble ship that Midshipman Decatur *began* to reduce the theoretical knowledge he had previously obtained of naval tactics and navigation, to that actual practice which enabled him, after many years had rolled over his head, and after passing through many scenes of desperate carnage, and appalling horrour, in the same ship, to *conquer*, and for the first time, to *add* a *British* frigate to the *American* navy.

But we must not here *anticipate* the numerous achievements of Decatur, nor the progress of the navy

as connected with them. It is the design to *detail* them in succession, and in as succinct and perspicuous a manner as the writer is able to perform the task. He must again express his deep solicitude, when reflecting upon the difficulty, delicacy, and interesting nature of the subject. He dare not hope for applause, and scarcely hopes to avoid censure. But as he would not be very highly elated by the one, nor very deeply depressed by the other, he will continue his delineations, however imperfectly they may be designed, or however unskilfully they may be coloured. This volume shall at least be a sincere, however humble tribute of the respect the writer wishes to offer to the memory of Decatur, and to the fathers and protectors, and augmentators of the naval power of America.

The United States frigate, for a considerable time after Midshipman Decatur entered her, was engaged in the arduous duty of protecting, and convoying American merchantmen, and chastising or destroying the contemptible swarms of French and Spanish picaroons that then infested the ocean. Had Barry, like Truxton and Little have had the good fortune to have fallen in with a French national ship of *superior* force, during the naval warfare with France, it would not have been left for his favourite Midshipman, Decatur, to have led the frigate *he* then commanded to gain the *first* frigate she ever conquered—nor would the glory of Decatur, although then just entering the years of manhood, have been postponed to the contest with the Barbary powers.

While in this frigate he was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant; an evidence of his progress in his darling

profession—of the attachment of his commander—and of the confidence of the administration. The frigate, from long cruises needed repairs, and was ordered into port to be refitted.

It would seem that a young officer, having been long subjected to the severe duty to be unceasingly performed on board a frigate in the early stages of naval life, would pant for temporary repose, at least. Not so, the ardent Lieutenant; he panted for nothing but naval renown. The conquest of the *Insurgente*, *La Vengeance*, and *Berceau*, aroused him to a pitch of enthusiasm, which perhaps needed the restraint of prudent caution. He solicited an order to join the U. States' brig Norfolk. His request was granted; and he sailed in her as *first* Lieutenant to the Spanish Main; hoping that this portion of the ocean would afford him some opportunity for the display of valour beyond that which is to be found in the more humble duty of conquering privateers, or convoying merchantmen. But he returned back with the Norfolk without having accomplished the predominant wishes of his heart. But while he was thus progressing in his profession—disappointed himself, and perhaps disappointing the high expectations of his too sanguine friends, he was acquiring that practical skill in naval tactics—that mysterious art of *commanding freemen*, and at the same time securing their attachment and respect, so indispensably necessary in a naval commander. It was in these early schools, that Decatur acquired this master-art in his profession.

The U. States frigate having been fitted for sea, Lieut. Decatur entered her in the same capacity in

which he left her. The naval warfare with France still continued, and continued by Frenchmen and Spaniards with a rapacity, barbarity, and diabolical cruelty, which assimilated the first mentioned, gallant and humane people, to the well known sullen, and execrable character, of the last. They preyed upon American ships and American commerce, like ravenous wolves upon innocent and unprotected flocks. In their treatment of our noble American sailors, they seemed to forget that they belonged to the human race. They were flogged, lacerated, almost starved, and what was the "*unkindest cut of all*," insulted as belonging to a cowardly, imbecile, and mean nation, which had neither the power nor disposition to protect their commerce or avenge the injuries of her citizens. The name of an American, which was a glorious passport through the world, after the war of the revolution, was thus sunk, traduced, degraded, and sneered at by every *petty* naval power in Europe. England, though not *then* the decided mistress of the sea, behaved with more respect, and although she was then able, as she has since proved, to annihilate every fleet in Europe, was guilty of comparatively no insult or injury to Americans; Englishmen knew that Americans were too much like themselves to "*Kiss the hand just rais'd to shed their blood.*"

But retribution soon trod with vindictive terror upon the heels of transgression; and taught transgressors that their ways were hard. The thunder directed by Truxton, Little, Stewart, Tryon, Barry, &c. and their *rising* officers and seamen, astonished these insolent foes, as much as the volcanoes of Etna and Vesuvius

alarm the natives of Sicily and Naples. After the victory over the Insurgente, La Vengeance, La Berceau, Diana, Flambeau, &c. the haughty tone of these boasting Hotspurs was lowered down even to mean supplication. Yes, a commander of a French armed ship having captured an American merchant vessel, addressed the master of her in terms like these,—" *Capitaine, you see dat I* NOW *use you ver well! Le Diable!! I ver much fear dat I be take myself, by some dem Americaine ship—and pray, Capitaine, do tell de Americaine officers dat I treat a you ver well, so dat dey may treat me ver well, ven I be prisoner too.*"*

Decatur continued on board this favourite United States Frigate, advancing towards that perfection in his profession to which he afterwards arrived, until peace was negociated with France.

The peace with France, suspended, for a time, the operations of the gallant little navy of the Republic. Some of the senior officers of the navy retired to the bosoms of their families, admired by the commercial portion of the community, and conscious themselves that they had served a country well, which they loved better than they did themselves. Although in a government like ours, every man may fearlessly express his opinion, as to the degree of munificence that government ought to bestow upon those whose lives have been devoted to its protection, in the field and upon the ocean, yet the government only can settle the question.

* Lest this singular humiliation of an imperious officer may be thought too highly coloured, I would state that it was communicated by Capt. David Churchill, of Connecticut, who was himself prisoner to this officer. His word will never be doubted.

To pour out the treasures of the nation upon fortunate and victorious officers in the army and navy, at the expense of the people who supply the treasury by their humble and unnoticed industry, might alarm an intelligent and free people, who vigilantly scrutinize every measure of the government; especially those which relate to money concerns. Monarchies, whether despotic or limited, always lavish favours upon those who support or augment the glory of their crowns. This gives splendour to the *few*, and reduces the *many* to poverty. The recent dukedom granted to Arthur Wellesly, Duke of Wellington, would have afforded, if properly distributed, domestic comfort to thousands of the English peasantry, who have been driven to insurrection for the want of food.

But extreme cases never fairly test a principle, any more than an argument that proves too much. The question is, whether the American Republic has not hitherto been too stinted in its bounty to its gallant defenders? The fathers of our gallant navy who retired to the shades of private life, with garlands of laurel bedecking their brows, retired with them alone. The treasury had been enriched by their toils, their perseverance and their valour—individuals rolled in wealth around them, by the protection *they* had afforded—yet they retired with no reward but that applause which their valour had entitled them to. When communing together, they might well say, as WASHINGTON, in his last communication to PUTNAM said, "REPUBLICS HAVE ALWAYS BEEN UNGRATEFUL." The names and the memories of Truxton, Little, the senior Decatur, Barry, the senior Morris, Tryon, Dale, Preble, and the rest of

the fathers of our navy, are cherished and remembered with delight by every midshipman and lieutenant who learned from them the skill, the discipline, and the whole system of naval tactics which enabled *them* to secure to themselves the high honours and copious rewards which their country has bestowed upon them. Whether their Preceptors are to be forgotten, by others, and no *national* token of respect to be shewn to them, is for the national councils to decide. Even the mouldering manes of Washington *yet* remain without any *national* monument.

# CHAPTER V.

Progress of the American Navy—Reduction of it by Act of Congress—Amount of it in 1801—Lieut. Decatur's views and determination—Depredations of Barbary states upon American commerce—Measures of the American government—Decatur enters into the first Mediterranean squadron as 1st Lieut. of the frigate Essex—his unremitting vigilance as a disciplinarian—Address to his seamen.

In the preceding chapters, the Life of Decatur has been traced from his birth, to what may be called the *first period* of his naval progress from a *Midshipman* to a first *Lieutenant*. In pursuit of the design of this work, we must now revert back to that period of our Republican government, when the important question whether the American navy should be *augmented* beyond its *small beginning*, or not, was agitated.

It is not the business of the historian, or biographer, to search for the motives, or to investigate the measures of statesmen. This question called into exertion, the finest talents in our country ; and in the administration of JOHN ADAMS, our national council embraced an assemblage of men who would have done honour to any country.

It was intended briefly to collate the arguments in favour of, and against the extension of the naval force, commenced by the Act of 1794. The intention is relinquished for the more exhilirating and delightful task of recording, with a pleasure which can be but poorly expressed by language, that the advocates for *naval*

*power*, by the irresistible force of reason, supported by the most brilliant eloquence, convinced our rulers of the necessity of naval defence. In 1798, the navy was augmented from *six* to *twenty* vessels of different rates. It would be useless to give a list of them. In the succeeding year they were increased to *thirty-two*, and, what *then* convinced our statesmen of the indispensable necessity of a gradual increase of the navy, provision was made for building SIX SEVENTY-FOURS.

But, lest the country should be burthened with public ships which were unfitted for service, hanging like a dead weight, and while exhausting the public treasure, could add nothing to the public defence, Congress, toward the close of Mr. Adams' administration, authorised the Executive to dispose of such vessels as should be deemed of the above character. The wisdom of this measure has since been clearly demonstrated to the entire satisfaction of those who are acquainted with the ponderous and inextinguishable debt in which Britain is involved, and probably will be as long as she remains a kingdom. Although her immense navy is that which gives her an almost boundless power; yet our cautious statesmen knew well that it had been one great means of involving her in almost boundless debt.

At the commencement of the administration of THOMAS JEFFERSON, in 1801, our Republic was at peace with all the powerful nations in the world; of course large standing armies upon land, which had no enemy upon land to conquer; and large fleets upon the ocean, which had no hostile fleets to encounter, were deemed inconsistent with the public interest. The voice of the

people called for an economical expenditure of the public treasure, and chose rather to see the national debt discharged, than to see it increased by any splendid projects for the gratification of national or individual ambition. That portion of the public ships which was adjudged useless to the nation, was sold, and converted into merchantmen. The policy of *that* measure is no longer doubted.

But the determination of the administration, wholly to suspend the building of the Seventy-Fours, when materials to a very large amount had been accumulated for that purpose, disappointed and almost disheartened the friends of an efficient *naval power*. It had recently been seen what a very small naval force had accomplished in the naval warfare with France, *then* the second naval power in the world. It had been seen, and it had been felt, what an immense augmentation of national wealth had been secured, and what a vast amount of individual property had been saved from sacrifice by our gallant countrymen, with a few armed ships, who carried our arms where they found our enemies.

In this warfare, as already shewn, the senior and junior Decatur had taken an active part, although neither of them had acquired those laurels which the one, in the highest, and the other, from the lowest, to the highest but one in the grade of officers, had sought to obtain. The father retired; but the son still adhered to that profession for which he seemed so peculiarly designed, and in which he was destined to act so conspicuous a part.

The following ships, in 1801, after the reduction of the navy composed the whole naval force of the Re-

public.—United States Frigate forty-four guns—the President, Constitution, and Philadelphia, of the same force ; the Chesapeake of thirty-six guns, the Constellation, Congress, and New York of the same force ; the Boston, of thirty-two guns, the Essex, Adams, John Adams, and General Greene, of the same force.

With these few public ships, and which were under the necessity of undergoing, previously, frequent repairs, was the American Republic to depend upon her rank upon the ocean. It was a hard case—but Stephen Decatur was never born to despair ; nor was he born to despair of the naval glory of America. He had a mind, capable of foreseeing the future greatness of his country, and a heart big enough to encounter all the dangers which might be endured in advancing its glory.

When he entered into the naval service, it was not done merely to wear an epaulette upon his shoulder, or a sword by his side, to excite the unmeaning admiration, and stupid stare of the rabble.—He had a country to save, and her injuries to avenge. He knew full well that the service into which he had entered, was a service pregnant with peril, and encircled with danger. This consideration, which would have induced a timid mind to retire to the peaceful shades of private repose, only served to stimulate him to pursue the hazardous path which he had entered. Although at this period he might have left the navy with the reputation of an accomplished young officer, yet this would have been too humble fame for him. And yet, it is not doing justice to his character to say that *personal fame* was his only object. He was a sincere lover

of his *country;* and was determined, whether in a humble or exalted station, to defend its rights, and secure its independence as far as his own exertions could accomplish that great object.

The little American Navy had but a short respite from action, after the arduous duty it had performed in the predatory warfare carried on against American commerce by the French, until seasonable chastisement induced them to make a peace with America. The class of officers of Decatur's grade had, in that contest, began, and well began their naval education. They had acquired that practical knowledge of naval tactics which qualified them to move in more exalted stations; and the country may now congratulate itself that an opportunity was then presented to call into operation the skill and the valour of the youthful pupils of the American Navy.

To every historian, the history of the barbarous, cruel, and sometimes destructive warfare, which the Barbary states, bordering upon the Mediterranean, have, for centuries past carried on against the whole commercial world, is perfectly familiar. It is left almost wholly to conjecture to determine why nations, powerful upon the ocean, have so long permitted the property of their subjects to become a sacrifice, and their subjects themselves to become the victims of these merciless hordes of inhuman wretches. The little kingdoms of Morocco, Algiers, Tripoli and Tunis, ever since the discovery of the magnetic needle has so immensely extended the commerce of the world, have preyed upon that commerce, and made miserable slaves of those who carried it on. Not sufficiently

powerful to draw forth the vindictive punishment of great naval powers, they have, nevertheless, been powerful enough to plunder merchant vessels of all nations, and reduce their crews to horrid bondage. Had the sanguinary and powerful monarchies of Europe, instead of contending for each others' crowns, and encroaching upon each other's dominions, have reduced these ferocious sons of Ishmael, and worshippers of Mahomet, to obedience and fear, they would far better have served the cause of humanity. It seems to have been reserved for the American Republic, situated more than three thousand miles from these enemies of all mankind, to reduce them to complete submission—or that submission which is occasioned by *fear*. Indeed, there is no other way for that portion of the world called *Christian*, to secure itself from the disciples of *Mahomet*, but by exciting their fear. They have such a deadly and implacable hatred against Christians, that they think they render the most acceptable service to their tutelar deity by immolating them upon the blood-stained altars of Mahomet. The most solemn treaties that can be negociated with them are bonds no stronger than a rope of sand, unless they are compelled to regard them by a force sufficient to menace them into a compliance with its provisions.

At the commencement of the nineteenth century, American commerce was expanded over the world. Much of it was spread upon the bosom of the Mediterranean, within the reach of those contemptible Barbary states already mentioned. Encouraged by the supposition that the American Republic, situated as they supposed in a wilderness across an immense ocean,

would afford no protection to its adventurous merchants, they preyed upon them with impunity. Having long received *tribute* from nations which they knew to be powerful, they supposed Americans to be the last people on earth who would dare assail the Turkish crescent. Their vessels and cargoes were considered as fair plunder, and the only way to redeem her citizens from the most miserable bondage which the diabolical cruelty of Mahometans could inflict upon Christians, was supposed to be by paying an exorbitant *ransom.*

The American government, adopted a sentiment worthy of its rising greatness, that the *whole community* is degraded when *one of its members* suffers. Casting an indignant frown across the Atlantic, and over the Mediterranean, it beheld at home its little gallant navy, and saw its officers and seamen impatiently panting for naval glory, and for an opportunity to pour out vengeance against these unsanctified heathen—these spoilers of unprotected innocence—these butcherers of mankind. Disdaining to supplicate for favour or forbearance from those whom they could drive from imperious insolence to humble submission; they scorned the very idea of paying *tribute*, unless it was at the mouth of the cannon. If the world once paid tribute to Cæsar, it was because Cæsar had power to enforce it. The American government, knew too well the noble pride of Americans, to see them paying tribute to miserable Moors, Algerines, Tripolitans, and Tunisians. There is a real dignity in graceful submission to irresistible power; there is a kind of pleasure in obedience when paid to a great potentate; but to see real power, sinking down before arrogant weakness, as it

cannot be endured by a gentleman, neither ought it to be endured by an independent nation. At this period the common sentiment of Americans was

"MILLIONS FOR DEFENCE—NOT A CENT FOR TRIBUTE."

It was uttered by the faltering tongue of age, and it hung upon the lisping lips of infants.

Decatur, if not already in his glory, clearly saw the shining path that led to it. He had not that untutored and blustering courage which sometimes, by fortunate circumstances, crowns a rash fool with laurels, but had that cool, regulated and *scientific* fortitude, which almost invariably carries forward a great man to temporal fame. If an hackneyed expression is admissible upon a subject so elevated, it might be said that Decatur was born to achieve victories "*secundem artem.*" He did not wish to leave to the uncertain and variable fortune of war, those conquests which are to be obtained by systematic, and regulated courage. At this period of his life he had acquired the first rudiments of naval tactics. He had studied his profession thoroughly, and was well prepared for admission to the practice of it.

The first squadron fitted out for the Mediterranean was placed under the command of Commodore DALE, who was amongst the earliest Post-Captains appointed by Congress. Decatur was ordered to the Essex Frigate as her first lieutenant. He had for some time enjoyed all the blandishments of fashionable life, and moved in its most exalted circles. He had participated in all the charms of refined society, and, delighted himself, he imparted delight to his associates. But he had higher views than those which limit the mind of the mere man of fashion. That effeminacy which is al-

most invariably produced by a devotion to the unmeaning ceremony of modern high life and fashionable amusements, could not impose their paralyzing effects upon this ardent child of fame. He hailed the time when he was removed from the pretty amusement of pacing the parlour, to the more manly duty of pacing the deck.

The duty of a first Lieutenant on board of a frigate, is vastly more arduous and difficult than those who are unacquainted with naval discipline imagine. Although not in absolute command, it is to him the Captain looks, in the first instance, for the regulation of the ship, and to him the crew are perpetually looking for instruction in discipline, and in their duty.* Every thing is to be reduced to perfect system, and nothing must be left to accident or chance. The economy of a ship of war most nearly resembles that of a perfect piece of machinery ;—the parts must all move in unison, and must operate upon each other according to the original design. To be sure, a single ship or a fleet are both liable to be encountered by the elements as well as by enemies ; and although they can conquer the latter, they are sometimes compelled to bow to the irresistible power of the former. It would border upon a truism to say that the utmost exertion of human skill and energy, are feeble when compelled to struggle against the decrees of that Power which " rides upon the wings of

* Commodore Decatur when he afterwards captured the Macedonian, thus speaks of his first Lieut. W. H. Allen.—" To his unremitted exertions in disciplining the crew, is to be imputed the obvious superiority of our gunnery, exhibited in the result of this contest."

mighty winds" and agitates the bosom of the mighty deep. Even in the perilous hour when "rude Boreas blustering railer" seems to hold uncontrolled dominion over the watery element, and to defy the efforts of man, there, order and system is to be observed, and, even when sinking in a wrecked ship, an American seaman chooses to go down, stationed at his quarters. But when approaching an enemy—clearing ship for action—beating to quarters—and discharging all the minute duties which, separately considered, would seem to a landsman too trifling to detail, but which, in the result, produced such a tremendous effect, the utmost order and most perfect system must be unremittingly observed.

Lieutenant Decatur, when he entered the Essex Frigate, brought with him, not only the most undaunted courage, but the practical skill of an accomplished naval disciplinarian. He also brought with him the manners and deportment of a gentleman—officer. He knew, in the sphere in which he moved, he had a right to command, and to enforce obedience; but he chose rather to have the noble fellows in the ship submit to their duty through voluntary choice, than by powerful coercion. He possessed the admirable faculty of infusing into the minds of seamen, the ardour that inspired his own exalted heart, and of rendering the strict, and sometimes severe *duty* of his men, their highest *pleasure*. It might be hazardous, to say that no other young officer in the navy possessed all these qualities; but it is fearlessly asserted that no one possessed them in a higher degree than Lieut. Decatur.

Assiduously employed in preparing the Essex for the

first important armed expedition from the new to the old world, he thus addressed the whole-souled tars of the ship :—" COMRADES—*We are now about to embark upon an expedition, which may terminate in our sudden deaths, our perpetual slavery, or our immortal glory. The event is left for futurity to determine. The first quality of a good seaman, is, personal courage,—the second, obedience to orders,—the third, fortitude under sufferings ; to these may be added, an ardent love of country. I need say no more—I am confident you possess them all.*" Such an address as this, from such a man as Lieut. Decatur, to such men as American seamen, some of whom had recently been led to victory by Truxton, and all panting for fame, must have operated like a shock of electricity. In a very few words, it conveyed the ideas of an officer, ardent in pursuit of glory—prepared for good or ill fortune—determined to be obeyed —glowing with patriotism toward his country, mingled with cordial affection for his men. Looking to his Captain as his authorised commander, he was uniformly respectful to him, and thus set an example to his crew which corresponded with his previous precepts. He had learned the salutary lessons of obedience, before he aspired to the authority of commanding.

# CHAPTER VI.

Lieut. Decatur sails in the frigate Essex to the Mediterranean, 1801, in the first American Squadron—Hazard of this enterprize—Captain Sterrett's victory in the Schooner Enterprise—Impatience of Lieut. Decatur in a blockading ship—He returns to America in the Essex—National glory and National taxes—Lieut. Decatur joins the second Mediterranean Squadron as 1st Lieut. of the frigate New York—Sails to the Mediterranean—Incessant attention to duty—Returns in the New York to America.

In 1801, the American squadron under command of Commodore Dale, weighed anchor, and left the waters that wash the shores of our free Republic, to carry our arms into the renowned MEDITERRANEAN, which laves the shores of the most renowned nations of ancient or modern centuries. Decatur had taken an affectionate leave of his justly venerated father, and the highly refined and literary circles of his numerous friends and connections. It is difficult to conceive of a separation of friends more interesting. The dignified and patriotic father, who had spent some years in the highest station in the navy when contending with *civilized* men, had now to dismiss a beloved son from his arms, who was destined to contend with merciless barbarians, who are totally regardless of the laws of *civilized warfare*. His admiring companions of both sexes, who full well knew, and duly appreciated the goodness of his heart, and the urbanity of his manners, could hardly endure the thought that he should expose himself to become a

victim to his thirst for fame. But his resolution was taken, and irrevocably fixed; and the sun might as well have been divorced from the ecliptic as to divert him from his purpose.

The reader may well pause again and reflect upon the immense importance, and imminent hazard of this expedition. To those the least acquainted with history, the cruel depredations of the Barbary states upon the whole commercial world for centuries are known, and the indescribable horrours of slavery amongst these uncivilized and inveterate followers of Mahomet, have always excited ineffable dismay. Nations bordering upon them, for years, and we may say, for centuries, have attempted in vain to reduce them to submission; and only secured themselves from their rapacity by paying them *tribute*.

*Since* the year 1805, expeditions to the Mediterranean, have become familiar; and, by our officers and seamen rather considered as pastime, and amusement, than as entering into a hazardous and doubtful contest; but let it be remembered, that *until* 1801 no American armed ship or squadron had ever passed the streights into that sea, which had so long been infested by barbarian corsairs—let it also be remembered that STEPHEN DECATUR, was one of those who *led the van* in the acquisition of the fame which has since shone so conspicuously upon the American navy in the Mediterranean. This required the most consummate fortitude. It might *then*, although in a minor station, be said of Decatur as it was said of one of the first heroes of the revolution:—"HE DARED TO LEAD, WHERE ANY DARED TO FOLLOW."

No event of any deep interest occurred in the squadron in its passage to the Mediterranean. The solicitude of Commodore Dale,—of the Captains,—of all the Lieutenants and Midshipmen, and indeed of every seaman, down to the youngest boy, may well be conceived. From the close of the revolutionary war to that time, no American *national* ship had probably been seen sailing into the Mediterranean. British fleets and ships of every description were riding triumphant in the Atlantic and in that renowned sea. Flushed with the recent victories of the *Nile* and of *Copenhagen*, although at peace with the Republic, the officers would look with that malignant jealousy which characterises the feelings of Englishmen toward our countrymen, upon a little squadron of American ships, boldly sailing over the theatre of their *own* glory. It could hardly be expected that that intercourse which always passes between armed ships of nations at peace with each other could be avoided. Decatur, second in command of the fine little frigate *Essex* would not then shrink from a visit from any Admiral, of any grade, whether of the *white red* or *blue*, or of any Post-Captain, or Lieutenant in the British navy. That ship, as well as the rest of the squadron, was in prime condition. Such intercourse did pass; and, as declared at that period, excited the admiration, and jealousy, although not *then* the fear, of the gallant ocean-warriours of the "*fast anchored isle.*"

Commodore Dale conducted his squadron into the Mediterranean, without delay—declared the port of Tripoli to be in a state of blockade; and, according to the *old principles* of blockade, laid his squadron before the port to enforce it. The thunder-struck Tripoli-

tans remained in harbour with all their force, not daring to risk an encounter with a new and unexpected enemy. This put a sudden end to their ravages upon American commerce, which, for eighteen months previous, had been committed with impunity.

But the inactive, though vigilant duty of blockading an enemy, although of superior force, suited not the ardent and adventurous spirit of Decatur. It was his business however, to obey the command of his then superiors. The wary and cautious mind of Commodore Dale was well convinced, that the little squadron under his command was only calculated to afford protection to his countrymen, not to commence offensive operations against their enemies. Indeed, his instructions would not permit him to act offensively, as appeared from the conduct of the gallant and never to be forgotten *Sterrett*, commander of the schooner Enterprize, belonging to his squadron. As this event is mentioned as connected with the squadron in which Decatur sailed, and, was the *first* brilliant achievement of the American navy in the Mediterranean, it will be described, as nearly as it can be recollected in the language of the purser, when relating it to the writer a few years since. —" Lying off the island of Malta, so celebrated in ancient and modern history, a Tripolitan cruiser bore down upon our schooner, and gave us a broadside. It was instantly returned. For two glasses [two hours] the contest was terrible as can be imagined. She lowered the Turkish crescent, to the stars and stripes—but the cheers for victory had scarcely ended, when the cruiser hoisted her red flag, and poured into us another broadside. The contest was renewed with renewed

desperation. She again struck; and when Capt. Sterrett was approaching her, it was a third time renewed. The indignation manifested by the captain and crew is indescribable. I left my station as purser of the ship, was handing cartridges to the men, and distinctly heard the Captain exclaim, "*Sink the damned treacherous creatures to the bottom.*" The slaughter became dreadful on board the corsair, and the commander prostrated himself on the side of his ship, and, with his own hands flung his own flag into the sea. Capt. Sterrett, being instructed not to make any prize, from his quarter deck, ordered the perfidious Turk to throw all his guns, ammunition and arms of every kind into the sea, and tell his master this was the only *tribute* he would ever after receive from Americans."

Such was the interesting relation of a spectator and an actor in this *first* and signal victory of an American ship over a barbarian corsair. Its authenticity cannot be doubted, as it is confirmed in all the material circumstances, by the publications of that period. While the reader feels indignant at the perfidy of the Tripolitans, he cannot doubt their desperate courage in this bloody conflict. But the consequences to the vanquished barbarians, when they returned into port, shows the difference between an humane and generous nation, and a despotic, and vindictive power. The former would receive, even with applause, a *defeated* commander who had bravely defended his ship. Not so with the ferocious descendants of Ishmael, whose hands are against every man, not only against all the rest of mankind, but against their own inhuman clan. The Bashaw of Tripoli would rather approve than condemn the per-

fidy of his captain towards Capt. Sterrett—but to be *conquered* by a Christian—to strike the flag of Mahomet to a sect, deemed by him as only dogs, could not be endured. The miserable and forlorn commander, without even the form of a trial, with his wounds still bleeding, received five hundred bastinadoes, and was compelled to ride through the streets upon an ass to excite the furious contempt of the enraged populace.

This victory, although it might *now* be deemed a trifle, when compared with the tremendous conflicts which have since given so many victories to American fleets and ships, was nevertheless of immense importance to our country. Such consternation was produced by the loss of the corsair, and the terrible punishment of the commander, that the alarmed Tripolitans deserted the corsairs fitted for sea, nor could crews be found to supply those which were preparing for service. This first victory of Sterrett and his crew produced an effect upon Tripolitans, even greater than Hull's *first* victory did upon Englishmen.

While Captain Sterrett was thus signalizing himself in a contest with barbarians, Decatur, as first Lieutenant of the Essex, was compelled to perform the duty belonging to a mere blockading ship. He was too generous to envy this gallant champion the laurels he had gained by his valour; but he ardently wished for an opportunity to emulate his valiant deeds by his own achievements.

Decatur was in the situation of one of the ancient heroes—"*Compelled to perform his duty, yet anxious to gratify his inclination.*" It is undoubtedly a most fortunate circumstance for the naval glory of our country,

that our early commanders in the navy exercised caution in avenging the injuries received from our enemies upon the ocean. Had rashness marked their measures, they might indeed have shared with the glory of those who have gloriously fallen in "unequal combat;" but this would have secured no lasting benefit to their country in whose cause they had embarked, and whose permanent interest it was their duty to pursue. Furthermore, the commanders of armies and of fleets have *no right*, *wantonly*, to sacrifice the lives of the men, who have either *voluntarily* or *coercively* been placed under their command. *Men* are not *ammunition* to be expended at the pleasure of an ambitious leader, who might gain applause by sacrificing them as victims to his unhallowed ambition. Commodore Dale knew too well the amount of his force to advance into a contest where so many chances were against him. Had he commanded the force which one of his successors, PREBLE, afterwards commanded, his name might now be as glorious as his. But he accomplished the great object of his government in sending him, with the first American squadron into the Mediterranean—the protection of American commerce in that sea. *One* of his officers, Capt. Sterrett, commanding the Enterprise, was compelled to fight his ship single handed; and he did it to admiration. Had Decatur been placed in his situation, he would have displayed the same courage; but he was reserved for a future display of that noblest of virtues.

Commodore Dale, having accomplished the object for which he was dispatched with his squadron to the Mediterranean, returned with it to America. Lieut.

Decatur returned in the Essex; and was received by his friends and countrymen with those demonstrations of respect which might be expected from the character he had previously established. He had made his entry upon the theatre of his future glory. He had received occular demonstration of the predominant sentiment of the Mahometans of Africa—inveterate malice against his countrymen, and a determination, if within their power, to extirpate Americans from that sea upon which an immense portion of their commerce was carried on. He had made farther advances in his favorite profession, and had studied the character of the ferocious enemy he had afterwards to encounter.

The American government had made no essential additions to its navy in the absence of Decatur—that is, to that part of it which was calculated for distant expeditions. Not a hull of a Seventy-four had yet been laid, and not a single frigate had yet been added to the little gallant American navy. Although as previously mentioned, provision had been made for building six line of battle ships, aud the materials partially collected, the national authorities did not *then* see fit to prosecute this noble endeavour to afford *this* mode of protection for American commerce and American territory. National economy was then, as it ever ought to be, the fashionable doctrine. That little, stinted economy which will sacrifice a future, although an almost certain good, to save a little *present expense*, is by no means meaned here; but that economy which was calculated to save the Republic from that never-ending, that constantly increasing, that load of taxes, which tears from the hard earnings of patient industry, almost its whole

amount to increase the phantom of glory. One of the best kings who ever filled the throne of the Bourbons, when urged by the most ambitious minister of any king, to adopt some splendid project to advance the glory of his reign, answered—"I have no right to advance *my glory* by distressing my subjects. I wish for no greater glory than to see every one of my happy subjects, have a fowl in his pot every day." I must here be excused for introducing the language of a British subject; and no people on earth are fonder of national glory than the subjects of George IV.

"We can inform Jonathan what are the inevitable consequences of being too fond of glory. Taxes upon every article which enters into the mouth, or covers the back, or is placed under the foot; taxes upon every thing which is pleasant to see, hear, feel, smell or taste; taxes upon warmth, light or locomotion; taxes on every thing on earth, and the waters under the earth—of every that comes from abroad, or is grown at home; taxes on the raw material, taxes on every fresh value that is added to it by the industry of men; taxes on the sauce which pampers man's appetite, and the drug that restores him to health; on the ermine which decorates the Judge, and the rope which hangs the criminal; on the poor man's salt, and the rich man's spice; on the brass nails of the coffin, and the ribbands of the bride; at bed, or at board, couchant or levant, we must pay! The school boy whips his taxed top—the beardless youth manages his taxed horse with a taxed bridle on a taxed road; and the dying Englishman, pouring his medicine which has paid seven per cent. into a spoon which has paid fifteen per cent. flings himself back up-

on his chintz bed, which has paid 22 per cent.—makes his will on an 8*l.* stamp, and expires in the arms of an apothecary who has paid 100*l.* for the privilege of putting him to death. His whole property is then taxed from 2 to 10 per cent. besides the probate. Large fees are demanded for burying him in the Chancel: his virtues are handed down to posterity on taxed marble; and he is then gathered to his fathers, to be taxed no more." *

Such is the language of a subject of the king of Great Britain who participates as much as a subject can in the glory of Nelson and Wellington. Americans ponder with inexpressible delight upon the fame of Decatur and Jackson; but the tears of distress, occasioned by excessive taxation, thank heaven and our rulers, are not yet mingled with the smiles of triumph. The shouts of a famishing populace, following in the train of a returning conqueror, whose plaudits are rendered feeble for want of that food which has been exhausted by an army or a navy, can afford but a miserable satisfaction to a conquering hero, when recollecting that *his* glory has been acquired by robbing the people of the means of temporal happiness. "It was not that I loved Cæsar less, but that I loved Rome more" was the exclamation of the magnanimous Brutus over the body of the ambitious and bleeding Cæsar. It is not, that Americans are less fond of national glory, or less enthusiastically cherish the memory of its heroes, than Englishmen, but it is because they better understand the nature of true national glory,—that which produces the greatest happiness to the greatest number.

* Edinburgh Magazine.

If, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the American government had commenced the system of diminishing the national wealth, by a *rapid* increase of the navy, it might indeed, like England, have afforded its citizens the means of making distant conquests, and causing the thunder of America to reverberate in every latitude. Better understanding the true interest of the Republic, and the path to true glory, it only sought for sufficient power to *defend* our territory at home, and *protect* our commerce upon the ocean. To the everlasting glory of our rulers, they never led us into an *offensive* war, either upon land or water. Let the proud and imperious parliament of England boast of the wealth she can draw from the two Indies—and then let her be reminded of the distress, the misery and the agony she has spread over many of the finest portions of the globe, by means of her immense navy. Can the blood-stained history of Lord Hastings in India—the devastation of the whole Carnatic—the melancholy fate of Hyder Alli, and the Nabob of Arcott be forgotten ? And, can the distress of her own peasantry—— But we turn from the horribly disgusting subject to the more exhilirating one of tracing the *innocent* progress of the American navy, and the steps by which Decatur reached the acme of fame by his exploits upon the ocean.

After his return to America in the Essex, a small chasm occurred in his performance of naval service. Another squadron was soon fitted for the same design as that in which he returned to his native country—protection of American commerce in the Mediterranean. The American government had not yet seen fit to ad-

vance its naval force sufficiently to enable its naval commanders to act vindictively against the ferocious, yet contemptible Barbary states. Severe chastisement they most assuredly deserved; but Tripolitans were permitted, a little longer, to shield themselves in fancied security, and vainly to imagine that Americans would no longer spread dismay amongst them.

The second Mediterranean squadron was commanded by the senior Commodore Morris. Lieutenant Decatur exercised a *patience* which his subsequent vehement, and we may say impetuous courage would lead the reader to suppose he did not then possess. He continued in the navy, under the certain presumption that the government of his country would shortly be convinced of the necessity of more energetic measures against the Mahometan pests that infested a sea over which American commerce was so much expanded, and so much exposed.

In the second squadron, he sailed as 1st Lieut. of the frigate New York, a ship whose name no longer appears on our navy list. She had become nothing but a hulk, at the commencement of the second war between the American Republic and the United Kingdom of Great Britain, and barely escaped conflagration at Washington, when the British forces, who had a *right*, by the principles of civilized warfare *to destroy her*, but who chose, like the ancient Vandals in devastating Greece and Rome, to demolish and burn some of the finest specimens of art, and the choicest productions of science and literature.

Nothing occurred in this squadron of sufficient importance to render a minute detail of its operations ne-

cessary; indeed, it would be inconsistent with the design of this work. Decatur was almost incessantly employed in imparting naval instruction to the under-officers, and introducing that correct discipline amongst the seamen, which has since given such perfection to the naval tactics of America. The reader is referred to the preceding chapter for the sentiments and the conduct of Decatur when on board the Essex. The same course was continued by him on board the New York frigate. When he entered her, he had a crew to discipline, who were mostly strangers to him. But a good seaman sincerely respects and cheerfully obeys a good officer, the moment he meets him; and although long service in the same ship, more strongly cements the bond of union between an officer and a crew, yet *wherever* Decatur was placed, such is the declaration of one of his own officers.—"*He seemed, as if by magic, to hold a boundless sway over the very hearts of his seamen at first sight.*"

The very nature of naval service renders it necessary, either from promotions, different expeditions, unexpected danger, and numerous other causes, to remove Post-Captains, Masters commandant, Lieutenants, and perhaps Midshipmen from the ships in which they had previously exercised command and performed duty, and with the crews of which they had become familiarised. Although it may become indispensably necessary for the government to pursue this course, that necessity does not in the least diminish the difficulty it often imposes upon officers. It is admitted that an officer can generally *enforce* obedience to his commands

over men whose names and faces are as much unknown to him as those of the enemy he may have to encounter; but that obedience which is solely the result of fear of punishment, is vastly different from that which proceeds from respect and attachment.

Nothing occurred to Lieut. Decatur, any more than to the squadron generally, in this expedition.

# CHAPTER VII.

Lieut. Decatur ordered to take command of the brig Argus—Fortunate and unfortunate ships—Ideas of seamen concerning them—He sails in the Argus, and joins the third Mediterranean Squadron under Com. Preble—Com. Preble and the Emperor of Morocco—Decatur leaves the brig Argus, and takes command of the schooner Enterprise—Disastrous loss of the frigate Philadelphia—Lieut. Decatur captures a Tripolitan corsair, and calls her "Ketch Intrepid"—Rendezvous at Syracuse—Brief Sketch of Jussuff, Bashaw of Tripoli—Sufferings of Capt. Bainbridge and crew—Lieut. Decatur volunteers to attempt the destruction of the frigate Philadelphia.

After Lieut. Decatur returned to America in the second Mediterranean Squadron, he was ordered by the Navy Department to take command of the brig *Argus*. It might be deemed rather fanciful by a grave and fastidious reader to remark, that it was a fortunate circumstance with Lieut. Decatur, at this period of his eventful life, that he had never yet held any command in a *disgraced* ship. Indeed there never has been but *one* disgraced ship in the American navy. But more of this hereafter. Although seamen may be ranked with the most gallant and brave of men, I believe the fact will not be denied, that no class of men are so much influenced by ideas of *fate* and *destiny*, more harshly called superstition. If a merchant vessel meets with an untoward accident, even at its launch, it is remembered by the sons of Neptune, and often decides their conduct in regard to her. If she has been partially wrecked at sea, robbed by an enemy, lost many of her men

by contagious sickness, or has often been driven on shore by gales, it is sometimes difficult to ship a crew for her. This sentiment is, if possible, more prevalent with the seamen in the *naval*, than in the *merchants'* service. With a high sense of honour, and proud of the name of an American, they will hardly enlist under an *officer* who has even been *unfortunate*—much less if he *has been degraded.* This almost unaccountable influence has an equal control over their minds in regard to the *ship*.

Decatur had acted as Lieutenant on board the *United States* frigate in the short naval warfare with France, and in the *Essex* in the early stages of the warfare with Tripoli. Although these frigates had not then acquired the fame which is now attached to their *names*, they had been almost constantly in commission since they were first fitted for sea, and had rendered services which can hardly be estimated. The *Argus*, to which he was ordered as commander, bears a proud name with American seamen.

The Argus was a fine vessel of her class, mounting eighteen guns. Although the command of a Seventy-four, or a frigate gives to the commander a superior rank to him who commands a sloop of war, yet the duty and responsibility is no less important. The same system is to be pursued—the same discipline exercised, and the same obedience to be shewn.

It is believed that at the time Decatur took the command of the Argus, the rank of *Master-commandant*, had not been established in the American navy; for he took command of her as Lieutenant. The fact however is immaterial, as the duties devolving upon him were

the same. To one wholly unacquainted with the system of naval tactics, it would excite astonishment to observe the inimitable precision with which every operation is performed on board an armed ship. To describe it, would require a volume larger than some of our systems of military exercise.

Lieut. Decatur had become master of his profession; and the Argus, being the first vessel of which he was first in command, he could introduce on board of her that discipline, which by unremitted exertions for six years he had become so perfectly acquainted with himself. Although he was ordered to surrender the command of the Argus to Lieut. Hull* upon his arrival in the Mediterranean, and take the command of the schooner Enterprise, then commanded by that gallant and accomplished officer, yet he did not, in the least, remit his accustomed vigilance in preparing his crew for the arduous duty which they would probably have to discharge under another commander. STEPHEN DECATUR, however much he might wish to signalize himself by personal achievements, had no views unconnected with the glory of every officer, seaman, and ship, in the American navy. He felt, and he acted, as if every one of the two first were his brothers, and every one of the last ought to swim or sink in defending the rights, and in advancing the glory of his country.

Numerous interesting incidents, of no great importance, however, might be mentioned, which took place in the passage of the Argus across the Atlantic, and up the Mediterranean. But why swell the volume with the minor events of a man's life, when it is so exceed-

* Now Commodore Hull

ingly fertile with those of a more exalted character? When he arrived in that sea which was shortly to resound with the fame of his gallant, and I may say romantic, and perhaps *desperate*, "*deeds of noble daring*," he joined, as previously ordered, the Squadron of Com. PREBLE.

In the very brief and imperfect notices which have been made of the rise, progress, and achievements of the navy of the Republic, as connected with the life of Decatur, we now have reached the *second period* of the naval renown of our country, as the period of TRUXTON's command may emphatically be denominated the *first*. Yes, Truxton may be called the *Father*, as Preble may be denominated the *Preceptor*, of the brilliant constellation of gallant ocean-warriours, who now grace the Naval Register of our country.

It would be a most grateful task for the writer of these imperfect sketches of the life and character of Stephen Decatur, if he were able, to blend with them a suitable eulogy on the character of PREBLE, his favorite commander. But any *language* he could use, would lag far behind the *feelings* of those who served under that truly great naval officer, and would—

"Fall in the ear profitless as water in a sieve."

Preble was, like Decatur, bred a seaman. He early saw the gathering storm which hung, in lowering darkness, over the wide spread, and rapidly spreading commerce of America. He knew it must be protected or withdrawn from the ocean, the highway of nations, which, like the highways on land, is infested with robbers. He did not sink down in despair, and lament that

the merchants of the Republic should be suddenly driven from the seas, but early tendered his service to his country to aid in protecting it. His active services did not escape the notice of a government, ever wishful to bestow its honours upon those whose merit richly deserved them. The eyes of the nation were fixed upon Preble as the leader of that gallant band of heroes who were destined to avenge the injuries sustained by our countrymen from the wretched descendants of Ishmael, and the merciless followers of Mahomet. The choice of him, for that gigantic undertaking, evinced the penetrating sagacity of our government.

Fearful of involving the nation in an endless and increasing load of taxes by a ponderous navy, our rulers had thus far only extended protection to our Mediterranean trade. But the measures of mildness towards the infernal hordes upon the Barbary coast, only increased their barbarous ravages and implacable cruelty against christian merchants. More efficient measures were resolved upon by the American government, ant pacific language was changed to that of open defiance.

The year 1803 forms an era in the history of the American Navy. A small force was still in the Mediterranean, and the accomplished, energetic and gallant Preble was appointed to the command of a squadron consisting of the Constitution, 44 guns—Philadelphia, 44—Argus, 18—Syren, 16—Nautilus, 16—Vixen, 16—and Enterprize 14. Twenty-five years ago, such a squadron as this, coming from the American States, would have excited the sneers of every naval power in Europe; but *fifteen* years ago they saw this little

squadron accomplish what the largest fleets had never done.

Com. Preble hoisted his broad pendant on board the frigate Constitution. Lieut. Decatur, as he had been previously ordered to do, surrendered the command of the Argus, and took command of the schooner Enterprise, which, when commanded by the gallant Sterrett had been so distinguished. At the time Com. Preble arrived at Gibraltar, he found that the subjects of the Emperor of Morocco, in Moorish frigates, had encroached upon the rights of American commerce. Although his primary object was to administer salutary chastisement to the Tripolitans, yet, "*on his way*" to his ultimate destination, he concluded to pay a visit to the Emperor. Before his arrival, Commodores Rodgers and Bainbridge had indicated to this Prince of the Moors what he might expect from Americans if his subjects continued their depredations upon American commerce. But this imperious representative of the *Sultan* in Africa, seemed then to care little or nothing for a distant, and by him a despised power, although his armed ships had been captured and detained by its commanders. He *or* his officers had ordered all American merchantmen to be detained, and some had actually been seized. Com. Preble had ordered his squadron to bring in all Moorish vessels. Thus, in few words, stood affairs with Morocco, when, on the 5th October, 1803, Decatur's new commander, the decided Preble, anchored the noble Constitution, and the little Nautilus in the bay, within half a mile of the strong circular battery in the city of Tangiers. He was joined by the frigates New York, and John Adams, Com.

Rodgers. It was a proud sight for American seamen, to behold this little squadron riding at anchor before an Emperor's powerful battery, waiting the event either of a pacific interview, or a tremendous contest. Every ship was kept clear for action, and every man at his quarters night and day,—every thought was fixed upon the decision of Com. Preble and the emperor of Morocco.

Upon the 6th, the Emperor made his appearance with 20,000 troops on the beach, in full view of the squadron. After an exchange of salutes from the squadron and the battery, the Emperor, instead of sending forth the messengers of death, in hot-shot and grape, sent a present of bullocks, sheep, and fowls. But as the first would have excited no fear, the last created but little joy. It was no time for ceremony.—Preble was a man of business and *his* business *must* be done; and that without delay—he had more important concerns with the Bashaw of Tripoli, than he had with the potent Emperor of Morocco. Upon the 8th the Emperor *condescended* again to look upon Com. Preble's little squadron. Upon the 9th, the American Consul*

*This was the venerable *James Simpson*, who was appointed by President WASHINGTON as consul at Morocco, soon after the organization of the American government. He scarcely saw his native country again to the day of his death in 1820. He had erected a beautiful mansion-house upon a commanding eminence in the vicinity of Tangier, which he dignified by the name of *Mount Washington*. While the author of these sketches was writing a description of the Desert of Zahara, of the manners, habits and customs of the Wandering Arabs, and of the Western coast of Africa, from the *narration* of the worthy and ingenious

was *permitted* to communicate with the Commodore, and assured him, that all American ships detained should be released. by order of the Emperor, and that the Emperor would give audience to the Commodore on shore the next day.

Upon the 10th, the undaunted Commodore, having given orders to the commander of his squadron in his absence, to prepare for the worst, went ashore with only four attendants,* in full uniform and completely armed. He was as fearless on shore in Africa, as he was on board of his squadron in the bay of Tangiers. His admiring countrymen in the squadron, were gazing with anxious and silent expectation for the result of the interview; but the Commodore and his suite, of which the American consul was one, walked through the double files of Moorish dragoons with as much composure as they would have paced the quarter-deck of the

Capt. *Robbins*, so long a slave to the Arabs, he often mentioned this venerable consul as the most benevolent friend of Christian slaves and American seamen. It was to the exertions of this excellent man at Tangier, and of that pattern of humanity, Hon. WILLIAM WILLSHIRE, at Mogadore, that so many wretched slaves have been restored to freedom and happiness. After finishing the volume, I suggested to Capt. Robbins the propriety of dedicating it to these gentlemen, and couched the dedication in these terms—"Gentlemen—permit me to offer this volume to you. I have, upon the OCEAN, endured the distress occasioned by the elements—upon LAND, the miseries inflicted by *man*, and from YOU have enjoyed the blessings of humane benevolence, which I can repay only by lasting gratitude." A. ROBBINS.

* Capt. Charles Morris attended the Commodore as his Secretary, and communicated these and many more particulars.

frigate Constitution which was prepared to defend them, or to spread dismay amongst the Moors. The Commodore was *requested*, not *ordered*, to lay aside his arms, which he promptly declined. He, with the venerable American Consul, approached the Emperor who was arrayed in all the magnificent splendour of an eastern despot, and surrounded by an immense retinue of princes, guards, and slaves. The Emperor asked the Commodore if he was not in the fear of being detained as a slave. "No, Sir, you dare not detain me—but if you should presume to do it, my squadron now in your full view, would lay your battery, your city and your castles in ruins, in one hour." The awe-struck emperor, immediately gave orders for the restoration of all American ships, and confirmed the treaty of 1786. The Commodore revoked his orders to capture Moorish vessels, and thus, in a few days brought one of the most powerful of the Barbary States to the terms of peace.

Decatur, in the schooner Enterprise had for some time laid off the island of Malta, preparing for the contest which he concluded must be entered into when Com. Preble was ready to direct his whole forces against Tripoli. He had infused into the bosoms of his officers and seamen the noble ardour that inspired his own. Commodore Preble, having settled his affairs with the Emperor of Morocco, was now preparing to accomplish the great object of his expedition—the complete subjugation of Tripoli.

During this period, Capt. Bainbridge, in the frigate Philadelphia, (whose first commander was Decatur's father) with the Vixen Sloop of war, laid before Tripoli, and, with this small force, completely blockaded

that important port. On the last day of October, the Philadelphia, lying about fifteen miles from Tripoli, Capt. Bainbridge discovered a large ship with Tripolitan colours, between him and the shore. He immediately gave chase to her, and continued the pursuit, until the ship entered the port for safety. In beating out of the harbour, this noble frigate struck violently upon an unseen and an undescribed rock. It is wholly impossible to conceive what must have been the feelings of the gallant Bainbridge, and his no less gallant officers and crew, upon the happening of this dreadful disaster. He was even in a worse predicament than the heroic Trowbridge in the Culloden upon the ground. He was compelled to remain immoveable; and, unable to aid, was only a witness of one of the splendid victories of Nelson. Bainbridge and his crew, while the frigate floated, would have fought all Tripoli single-handed. But his irreversible fate was decided —the ship could not then be moved, and he was compelled, when an overwhelming Tripolitan force assailed him, to strike the banner of his country to the crescent of Mahomet, and, with his noble crew, to be reduced to the most abject slavery, which the most merciless of human beings can inflict upon civilized man. The whole crew exceeded three hundred Americans; and they were immediately immured in a dungeon. In this crew were *Bainbridge*, *Porter*, *Jones*, and *Biddle*, —names familiar to every American who knows or appreciates the glory of their country. And here I have the infinite satisfaction of recording an instance of mutual attachment, perhaps without a parallel in the history of the most romantic affection. Capt. Bainbridge,

his officers and crew, now reduced, in a degree, to equality, by common misery, pledged themselves to each other, never to separate alive; but to endure one common bondage, or enjoy together one general emancipation. The friends of the accomplished Biddle offered the sum demanded for his ransom, which he decidedly refused to accept. This noble crew were confined in a tower which overlooked the bay of Tripoli. They beheld their gallant countrymen, waiting triumphantly in their floating bulwarks, and knew that the day of their redemption would one day come. They knew that a Preble, a Decatur, and the whole band of unconquerable warriors from the "*land of their home*," would not forget *them*. They knew what they *had* done in Morocco and what they *could* do in Tripoli. Yet might they well say with the first of geniuses,—"Disguise thyself as thou wilt—still, *slavery*, thou art a bitter cup." They could not help thinking of their country—their friends; and, what to an ocean-warrior perhaps is dearer than all, the laurels they wished to gain in chastising the diabolical wretches, who, by an unavoidable disaster, and not by their courage, now held them in degraded subjugation.

But we turn from a picture, coloured in the darkest shades of human calamity, to one of the brightest ornaments of the human race. Lieutenant Decatur, on the 14th of December sailed from Malta with the Schooner Enterprise, and laid his course for Tripoli. The Tripolitans had seen this little Schooner *before*, and the reader already knows what was the result of the interview.

On the 23d, in full view of Tripoli, he engaged an

armed Tripolitan vessel; and in a few minutes made her his own. She was under Turkish colours and manned principally with Greeks and Turks, and commanded by a Turkish captain. Under these circumstances, the Lieutenant hesitated for some time whether to detain or release the captured vessel. Upon investigation, he found that there was on board two very distinguished Tripolitan officers, and that the commander of her, in the most dastardly manner, had attacked the Philadelphia frigate when driven on a rock. He farther learned that on this occasion he fought under false colours; and that when the heroic but unfortunate crew of the Philadelphia could no longer resist the immense force brought against her, he boarded her; and, with the well known ferocity of a Mahometan, plundered the officers of the captured frigate. Here the exalted character of Decatur began to be developed. He was then, as he ever was, a lamb to his friends—a lion to his enemies. He had before his eyes the beloved frigate which had fallen a victim to misfortune and to demons. But, adhering rigidly to the rights of war, he manifested no resentment against the humbled and trembling wretches now in his power. His great spirit scorned to make war upon weakness, or triumph over a fallen foe. He indignantly disposed of the crew—forwarded the papers of the vessel to the American government—took her into the service of his own country, and gave her a name which she afterwards so well supported,—THE KETCH INTREPID.

Notwithstanding the loss of the fine frigate Philadelphia, and the bondage of her noble crew, which very materially reduced the force of Com. Preble's little

squadron, that veteran officer was not to be deterred from attempting to accomplish the great object of his government in sending him to the Mediterranean. Fortunately for his own fame, and for the lasting glory and benefit of his beloved country, he united the most cool deliberation, with the most dauntless courage. The first enabled him to prepare well for the tremendous contest which lay before him. He might have exclaimed, in the language of an inimitable, although not a *very* modern Bard : .

> "The wide, th' unbounded prospect lies before me,
> But shadows, clouds, and darkness sit upon it."

The second enabled him, when entered into the dreadful brunt of devastating warfare, to brave death in its most appalling and horrid forms. In Lieut. Decatur, he recognized a chivalrous warriour, who, amidst a host of dangers and the strides of death, thought less of himself than he did of his country and his crew. Fortunately was it, we may again say that there was such a man as Preble, at such a time, to command such a man as Decatur. He wanted nothing to stimulate him to the most daring attempts. At that youthful period of his life, his courage rather needed restraint than excitement. Preble, as commander of the little squadron in the Mediterranean was in some measure situated as Jackson was, when commanding his little army at New Orleans. His language to Mr. Monroe, then Secretary at War, was, "*As the safety of this city will depend upon the fate of this army, it must not be incautiously exposed.*" The gallant Commodore might have said :—"As the glory of my country, the safety of her merchants, and the

redemption of my countrymen from slavery, depend upon my small force, it must not *rashly* be carried into a contest, where so many chances are against its success."

He selected the harbours of the cities of Syracuse and Messina for his general rendezvous in the Mediterranean,—occasionally laid off the island of Malta, and sometimes carried his squadron into the bay of Naples. No portion of this globe could afford the ardent hero and the classical scholar a more sublime subject for contemplation. Except some sections of the immense American Republic, no part of our world seems to have been created upon a scale so wonderfully grand. It is calculated to inspire the most exalted views of the boundless greatness and incomprehensible wisdom of creative power. Our countrymen were here almost in view of *Etna*, and *Vesuvius*, which have for ages spread desolation over the cities at their bases. The gulf of *Charybdis*, the place where *Euphemia once was*, and where the hideous desolation of earthquakes are yet visible through *Calabria*, were within a few hours sail. In addition to this, it has been the theatre of the most important events recorded in ancient or modern history. The mind of the historian, the scholar, the poet and the warriour, seem to be irresistibly hurried back to the days of antiquity, and traces the events and the works which have so astonishingly developed the moral, physical, and intellectual faculties of man. Commodore Preble had in his squadron many scholars of the first water, as they were all heroes of the first stamp. The region in which they moved, and the object they had to accomplish, were

both calculated to stimulate them to that pitch of unparalleled enthusiasm, which led them to the achievement of such unparalleled deeds.

The renowned city of Syracuse is situated upon the island of Sicily. The historian will readily recollect its former grandeur and importance; but the writer has enjoyed the infinite satisfaction of learning its present state, from some of the accomplished officers of Commodore Preble's squadron, and other American gentlemen, who have recently explored the island of Sicily, and resided in the city of Syracuse. This island was once the region of fertility; and while the Roman legions were striding from conquest to conquest, over what was then called "the whole world," this island was literally their granary. The climate is altogether the finest that can be imagined. The soil produces not only all the necessaries, but all the luxuries of life. The ancient Syracusans carried their city to a pitch of grandeur, second only to that of Rome. It can hardly be believed in the nineteenth century, that this single city, in ancient days, furnished one hundred thousand foot soldiers, and ten thousand horsemen, but such was the fact. And when it is mentioned that her navy amounted to four hundred vessels, the assertion would almost seem to be incredible, but it is no less true. At that period of their history, the Syracusans flourished by war,—they afterwards became degenerated by peace. Rome conquered Greece by arms, and was herself conquered by the refinements of Greece. It was easy for the clans which composed what is generally called the "Northern Hive" in the fifth century of the Christian era to conquer them both. They only had

to conquer a people by arms, who had conquered themselvs by effeminacy. The Saxons, from whom Englishmen and Americans principally derive their origin, led the van of that myriad who precipitated themselves upon the ancient nations of Europe, and established those which now so clompletely eclipse their former splendour. The Gauls, Franks, and other clans followed in their train, and European nations are now what the Romans, Grecians, Carthagenians, and other ancient nations were, about the commencement of the Christian era; and London, Paris, and other cities are *now*, what Rome, Syracuse, and other cities were *then*.

While at anchor in the harbour of Syracuse, Lieut. Decatur, and his brother officers frequently went on shore, and explored this city of ancient wealth, refinement and grandeur. In point of *extent*, the residence of the Lieutenant, when in America, (although Philadelphia is the largest city in our Republic,) it would bear but a feeble comparison with Syracuse. It is twenty-two miles in circumference; although its limits could then be discovered only by the mouldering ruins of its ancient boundaries. Although the natural charms of the country remain the same as they were when the fiat of creative power brought the universe into existence, yet the miserable, degenerated, effeminated, and vitiated descendants of the ancient Syracusans, had so scandalously degraded the noble ancestors from whom they descended, that the officers of Commodore Preble's squadron, saw nothing in them to excite their respect —much less their admiration.

But Decatur was not ordered by his government to sail in an American armed ship, to the Mediterranean

for the purpose of visiting the tombs of Archimedes, Theocritus, Petrarch and Virgil, or to return home and amuse and delight his countrymen with the present state of the "classic ground" which these splendid geniuses have rendered sacred. His business was to conquer a barbarous foe bordering upon another portion of the Mediterranean, who never had any more pretensions to the productions of genius, than they have to the exercise of humanity. He perfectly understood the ancient character of the Syracusans, and from occular demonstration, had plenary evidence of their modern degeneracy. As the squadron rendezvoused there to obtain water and fresh provisions, the officers and seamen had occasion frequently to be on shore within the city by night and by day. Although the American Republic was at peace with the Neapolitan government, yet there was no *individual* safety when intercourse became necessary with its vindictive and sanguinary subjects. From many interesting narrations of many of the accomplished officers of Commodore Preble's squadron, the fact may be asserted that the Syracusans, who were amongst the most noble of the ancients, are amongst the most degraded of the moderns. Their sordid and mercenary rulers exercise a boundless, undefined and unrestrained power over the miserable and degraded people—they, in hopeless despondence, prey upon each other; and, like Macbeth, having long waded in blood, may as well advance as to recede; and, as if *blood* was their *aliment*, they make a business of *assassination*. Armed with concealed daggers, stilettoes, and knives, our unsuspecting officers and seamen were assailed when the earth was shrouded in darkness, and

sometimes escaped with their lives by putting their assailants to death. Lieut. Decatur, with his favourite associate, Midshipman Macdonough, having occasion to be ashore until evening, the latter was assailed by three of these armed assassins. He placed himself against the wall of an ancient ruin, and defended himself with his cutlass. He severely wounded two of the assailants, the third fled; and for safety ascended to the top of a building—was pursued by Macdonough, precipitated himself to the ground, and met with the reward of his infernal thirst for blood, in instantaneous death.

This is no place for grave and prolix reflections—*they* belong to the writers of ethics, and not to the biographer; but it is utterly impossible to avoid the inquiry, how the human heart can become so completely divested of the feelings of humanity, and be metamorphosed into those of beasts of prey?—and how those portions of the world where the arts and sciences not only once flourished, but may be said almost to have originated, should now be reduced to a state far worse than that which is *naturally* savage? Many portions of Asia, Europe and Africa, bordering upon the renowned Mediterranean sea, are now inhabited by races of men far less magnanimous, and little less ferocious, than the aborigines who roam through the boundless wildernesses of America, where science never diffused its lights, and where civilization never imparted its refined blessings.

While at Syracuse, Lieut. Decatur was incessantly employed in preparing his crew for the unequal, the daring and desperate contest in which he was shortly to enter. His arduous and impatient soul panted for an

opportunity to avenge the injuries of his country, and above all, to relieve his countrymen from the dreadful state of wretchedness to which they were reduced by their slavery, under *Jussuff*, at that time reigning Bashaw of Tripoli.

It will not, I trust, be deemed a digression—indeed, upon second thought, it is no digression at all, to make a brief allusion to the blood-thirsty demon who sat upon the blood-stained throne of Tripoli, while Decatur was pouring out the vindictive wrath of an injured Republic, upon his no less blood-thirsty subjects.

Jussuff, was, to the reigning family of Tripoli, what Richard III. once was to the reigning family of England. He was a *remote* heir to the throne of the Bashaw, filled by his father. The certain progress of the king of terrors, or the sanguinary hand of some *other* assassin, *might* have placed him upon the throne, according to the laws of succession, (if they have any in Tripoli,) without ascending it with his hands reeking in the blood of his father and his eldest brother. Both of these he had murdered; and his next oldest brother, *Hamet Caramalli*, apprehending the same fate, sought a refuge from unnatural death, by fleeing into Egypt! Having no other rival, this modern Cain mounted the throne of his father and his brother; and, as he had acquired it by violating the laws of God, of Nature, and of Man, he endeavoured to support himself upon it, by re-acting the same tragical scenes which carried him to it. The "compunctious visitings" of conscience, the monitor in the human breast, excited no horrors in his callous and reprobate heart. A gleam of horrid triumph seemed to shed a baleful and blasting illumination

over his blackened and bloody soul. He "grinned horribly a ghastly smile" at the fate of his innocent and exiled brother, and gnashed his teeth at the gallant Bainbridge, his noble crew and the rest of American prisoners then in his dungeons. It was in vain for Mr. Lear, then American Consul, by all the melting and impassioned appeals he could make to the obdurate heart of this devil incarnate, to obtain the least mitigation of the indescribably wretched bondage to which his beloved countrymen were reduced. As well might the lamb bleat for mercy in the paw of a tiger, or the child attempt to demolish the Bashaw's castle with his wind-gun. Mr. Lear was compelled to be an agonized spectator of the accumulated and accumulating miseries of gallant Americans, who had left the regions of happiness—the arms of fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters—of wives and children, to redeem by their courage, their own countrymen, who had previously been enslaved. The powerful arms of Bainbridge and his crew, which, at liberty, would have scattered death amongst a host of Turks, were pinioned and lashed together, and driven to the shore; and, in taunting derision, commanded to cast their swimming eyes upon their shipmates, then wafting in the bay of Tripoli; and to heave forth the sighs of hearts, already bursting, for the land of their homes. But I must retract,—not a tear was dropped; not a sigh was heaved; for revenge had closed the flood gates of grief, and American hearts, beating in bosoms truly American, panted for nothing but vengeance upon their demoniacal oppressors.

The Bashaw, who might well be compared to the

toad which wished to swell itself to the size of the ox, reposed in fancied security. He cast a malignant glance at the little squadron in which Decatur was one of the distinguished leaders. He saw in the bay spreading before his city, his batteries, and his castles, a noble American frigate, (the Philadelphia,) and the pride of the American navy—upon which the "star-spangled banner" once triumphantly waved, now added to *his* naval force; manned by a double crew of Tripolitans, and with the Turkish crescent waving on its mast. He saw its once gallant crew, miserable slaves in his own gloomy dungeons; and, in anticipation, feasted his cannibal appetite upon all the victims which the American squadron could add to his list of Christian slaves.

Decatur's fearless and noble soul was not only aroused to the highest pitch of enthusiastic courage, but it was absolutely inflamed with desperation to behold his former companions in the navy thus degraded—thus humiliated—thus subjugated. But, like a lion growling at a distance, and indicating to his foe their future fate, he was restrained, by a superior power, from rushing too precipitately upon the barbarous enemy he wished instantly to encounter. All personal considerations were completely merged and lost in the agony he felt for his brother officers and seamen in slavery. He had taken his life in his hand, and seemed anxious to offer it up, if so decreed by the God of battles for the redemption of his endeared countrymen. But the gallant, the noble, and yet cautious Preble, his almost adored commander, knew full well that the *means* in *his* hands must be directed with the utmost caution to accomplish the *end* he had in view. With no less

ardour than Decatur, he had a far greater responsibility as *commander in chief* of the little American squadron. He could not endure the thought, that his favorite officer, should fall a victim to his desperate courage; and the gallant Lieutenant was, for a time, restrained from attempting the desperate and romantic enterprize.

It is hardly within the compass of the human imagination to conceive of a combination of circumstances so well calculated to inspire the soul of an ardent and chivalrous hero, like Decatur, as the situation of the Philadelphia frigate and her gallant crew. She was built in the city where he had spent the days of his boyhood—where he obtained the rudiments of a polite education, and the theoretical principles of naval tactics. In addition to this, his beloved and gallant father was her first commander. Further—his companions (her crew) with whom, for previous years, he had served in our infant Navy, were held in "durance vile" by the vilest of wretches who bear the form of man. These were enough—but let not the cool reasoners upon human motives and human passions sneer when it is said, that a consideration paramount to all these swayed his noble heart—HIS COUNTRY WAS DEGRADED. That, indeed, was enough for him; for his whole life evinced that his country was first in his heart—first in his arm, and first in the hour of appalling danger. To that country his immortalized father had dedicated him—to that country he had voluntarily devoted himself. Had he not been educated in a Christian country, it would seem as if he had taken his system from the doctrines taught by Lycurgus to the ancient Spartans.—"*Obedi-*

*ence to the laws—respect for parents—reverence for old age—inflexible honour—undaunted courage—contempt of danger and of death:—and, above all,* THE LOVE OF GLORY AND OF COUNTRY."*

To *recapture* the Philadelphia, was absolutely impracticable, as the writer has been assured by some of the accomplished officers of Commodore Preble's squadron. She was moored under the guns of the Bashaw's castle and his extensive and powerful batteries, and was herself completely prepared to join them in repelling any assailant that should approach her. There were these alternatives—She must either be *destroyed*, constantly *blockaded*, or suffered to *escape* and commit depredations upon the commerce and outrage upon the citizens of the country who built, equipped and manned, her.

Decatur, with the most impassioned and fervent appeals to the Commodore, entreated him to permit an attempt to *destroy* her as she lay at her moorings. It was an attempt so pregnant with danger, and approaching so near to certain destruction, that the heroic, though cautious Preble hesitated in granting the request. The imminent hazard of the enterprise was pointed out in such a manner as was calculated to allay the ardour of the most romantic heroism. But Decatur, rising above the ordinary calculations of chances—retiring into his own bosom, and forming his judgment from his own exalted gallantry, took no counsel from fear, but

* Vide Professor Tytler's Lectures, on the Elements of General History, Ancient and Modern.

volunteered his services to his superior officer, to command the desperate expedition. At length

"He wrung from him his slow leave,"—

and immediately commenced his preparations for the awful undertaking. The ardour of the Lieutenant was increased as the danger of the attempt was magnified. At this early period of his life, he seemed to have *revived* the spirit which pervaded the hearts of men in the "Age of Chivalry;" and to have adopted the ancient axiom "the greater the danger the greater the glory." But let it be remembered that Decatur sought for *glory*, only by the discharge of *duty*.

Uniting the most consummate sagacity, with the most daring courage, he selected the little Ketch *Intrepid*, which as previously mentioned he had himself captured, in full view of the bay where the Philadelphia was moored. He was aware that if the expedition should prove successful, it would render the mortification of the insolent Bashaw doubly severe, to see a little vessel which lately belonged to his *own* marine force, boldly advance under the guns of his battery and castle and destroy the largest ship that belonged to his navy. A ship too which he neither built nor honourably captured, but which became his by the irresistable laws of the elements.

No sooner was it known that this expedition was to be undertaken, than the crew of Lieut. Decatur volunteered their services—ever ready to follow their beloved commander to victory or to death. Other seamen followed their example. Nor was this the most conclusive evidence of the unbounded confidence plac-

ed in his skill and courage. Lieut. CHARLES STEWART, also volunteered under Decatur; and for the expedition took the Brig Syren, and a few boats; and, to show still farther the high estimation in which he was holden—Lieut. JAMES LAWRENCE, and CHARLES MORRIS, and THOMAS MACDONOUGH (then midshipmen) entered on board the Intrepid with Decatur. What a constellation of rising ocean heroes were here associated! They were *then* all young officers, almost unknown to fame. *Now* their names are all identified with the naval glory of the American Republic.

## CHAPTER VIII.

Improper estimate of battles—Lieutenant Decatur sails for Tripoli in the Ketch Intrepid—Baffled by adverse winds—diminution of provisions—Reaches the harbour of Tripoli 16th Feb. 1804—Loses the assistance of the Syren and the boats—Enters the harbour with the Ketch Intrepid—Boards the Philadelphia, followed by Morris, Lawrence, Macdonough and the crew—Compels the Turks to surrender—Sets the Philadelphia frigate on fire, and secures his retreat—Gen. Eaton and Caramalli—Consternation of Bashaw—Joy of American prisoners—Small force of Commodore Preble.

The readers of history are extremely prone to attach importance to battles upon land or upon sea in proportion to the *numbers* engaged in them, and to bestow a greater or less degree of applause upon the victors on the same principle. Nothing can be more fallacious. The battle of New Orleans, in America, in point of courage and generalship, equalled that of Waterloo in Europe; and the event we are about to record, is not surpassed, if indeed it was equalled, by the victory at Copenhagen. We do not here speak of the *consequences* which followed to the different *countries*, but of the *heroes* who achieved the victories; and it is fearlessly asserted that when every circumstance is taken into consideration, that the fame of Jackson in the one will vie with that of Wellington,—and Decatur's in the other with that of Nelson.

As soon as the crews of the Ketch Intrepid and the brig Syren were made up, the utmost dispatch was

used in preparing them for the expedition. The Ketch was fitted out as a fire ship, in case it should be necessary to use her as such. The Brig with the boats accompanying her, were to aid, as circumstances rendered it necessary, and to receive the crew of the Ketch if she was driven to the necessity of being blown up.

Upon the 3d day of February, Decatur weighed anchor in the little Intrepid, accompanied by Lieut. Stewart, in the Syren, who was also accompanied by the boats A favourable wind would have wafted them to their destined port in less than five days; but for fifteen days, they encountered the most boisterous and tempestuous weather. Instead of encountering a barbarous enemy, they were buffeting the waves and struggling for life with a tumultuous and agitated sea. Nothing could be better calculated to repress the ardour of Decatur and his little band. His provisions were diminished and almost expended; and although not a murmur escaped from the lips of the humblest seaman, it may well be imagined what must be their reflections, when liable every hour to be swallowed up by the waves; and if they escaped them to be famished with hunger! Men of the stoutest hearts who would undauntedly rush to the cannon's mouth, became even children at the prospect of famine.

At length, upon the memorable 16th of February, 1804, a little before sun-set, Decatur hove in sight of the bay of Tripoli, and of the frigate Philadelphia, with the Turkish Crescent proudly waving at her head. The apprehensions arising from storms and famine were suddenly banished by the prospect of a glorious

victory or a glorious death. Lord Nelson, when entering into the action of *Cape St. Vincent*, exclaimed, "GLORIOUS VICTORY—OR WESTMINSTER ABBEY."* Decatur might have exclaimed—"THE PHILADELPHIA FRIGATE—OR A MONUMENT IN PHILADELPHIA CITY."

It had previously been arranged between Decatur and Lieut. Stewart that the Intrepid accompanied by the boats which had been attached to the Syren, should enter the harbour at 10 o'clock—with the utmost possible silence bear down upon the Philadelphia, and take her by boarding. But as if fate had entered its *veto* against the success of the expedition, the Syren, with all the boats, by a change of wind, were driven from five to ten miles from the Intrepid, leaving Decatur, with only seventy volunteers in this small Ketch. The moment of decision had come. His provisions were nearly expended, and the expedition must have been relinquished for that season unless the object of it was *now* accomplished. He knew that his gallant little crew were as true to him as the needle, by which he directed his ketch to Tripoli, was to the pole. Wherever he would lead, he knew they would follow. Having a Maltese pilot on board the Ketch, he ordered him

* To the common reader, the exclamation of Nelson may not be altogether intelligible. It has, for some centuries been customary in England to entomb the bodies of Heroes, Statesmen, Poets, &c. in "*Westminster Abbey*" as one of the highest honours that can be bestowed upon the "illustrious dead," and to erect a monument or statue near them. The great Doct. Johnson, in the agonies of death, was consoled, when told that his body would be there deposited. The reader will find an elegant description of this ancient Cemetery in Professor Siliman's Journal.

to answer the hail from the frigate in the Tripolitan tongue; and, if they were ordered to come to an anchor, to answer that they had lost their anchors upon the coast in a gale of wind, and that a compliance with the order was impossible. He addressed his gallant officers and men in the most animated and impassioned style—pointed out to them the glory of the achievement, which would redound to themselves, and the lasting benefit it would secure to their country—that it would hasten the redemption of their brother seamen from horrible bondage, and give to the name of Americans an exalted rank even amongst Mahometans. Every heart on board swelled with enthusiasm, and responded to the patriotic sentiments of their beloved commander, by wishing to be led immediately into the contest. Every man was completely armed—not only with the most deadly weapons, but with the most dauntless courage.

The reader may form some faint conceptions of the tremendous hazard of this engagement, by learning that the Philadelphia was moored near the Bashaw's extensive and powerful batteries, and equally near to what he deemed his impregnable castle. One of her full broadsides of twenty six guns pointed directly into the harbour, and were all mounted and loaded with double headed shot. Two of the Tripolitan's largest corsairs were anchored within two cable's length of her starboard quarter, while a great number of heavy gunboats were stationed about the same distance from her starboard bow. As the Bashaw had reasons daily to expect an attack from Com. Preble's squadron, the Tripolitan commander of the Philadelphia had aug-

mented her crew to nearly a thousand Turks. In addition to all these formidable,—yea, appalling considerations, Decatur and his noble crew knew full well that after having entered into this dreadfully unequal combat there was no escape. It was a "*forlorn hope*"—it was victory, slavery, or death—death perhaps by the hands of the Turks—perhaps by the explosion of the Intrepid.

As soon as darkness had concealed the Ketch from the view of the Tripolitans, Decatur bore slowly into the harbour, and approached the numerous magazines of death which were prepared to repel or destroy any assailant that should approach. The light breeze he had when he entered the harbour, died away, and a dead calm succeeded. At 11 o'clock, he had approached within two hundred yards of the Philadelphia. An unbroken silence for the three preceding hours had prevailed; reminding the poetical reader of the expressive couplet—

> "A fearful silence now invades the ear,
> And in that *silence* all a *tempest* fear."

At this portentous moment, the hoarse and dissonant voice of a Turk hailed the Intrepid, and ordered her to come to anchor. The faithful Maltese pilot answered as previously directed, and the sentinel supposed "*all was well.*" The Ketch gradually approached the frigate; and when within about fifty yards of her, Decatur ordered the Intrepid's small boat to take a rope and make it fast to the fore chains of the frigate, and the men to return immediately on board the Ketch. This done, some of the crew with the rope, began to warp

the Ketch along-side the Philadelphia. The imperious Turks at this time began to imagine that "all was *not* well." The Ketch was suddenly brought into contact with the frigate—Decatur, full armed, darted like lightning upon her deck, and was immediately followed by Midshipman Morris. For a full minute they were the only Americans on board, contending with hundreds of Turks. Lieut. Lawrence and Midshipman Macdonough, as soon as possible, followed their commander, and were themselves followed by the *whole* of the *little* crew of the Intrepid. A scene followed which beggars description. The consternation of the Turks, increased the wild confusion which the unexpected assault occasioned. They rushed upon deck from every other part of the frigate, and instead of aiding, obstructed each other in defending her. Decatur and his crew formed a *front* equal to that of the Turks, and then impetuously rushed upon them. It was the business of the Americans to slay, and of the Turks to die. It was impossible to ascertain the number slain; but it was estimated from twenty to thirty. As soon as any Turk was *wounded*, he immediately jumped overboard, choosing a voluntary death, rather than the disgrace of loosing blood by the hand of a "*Christian dog*," as the Mahometans universally call all Christians. Those who were not slain, or who had leaped overboard, excepting one, escaped in a boat to the shore.

Decatur now found himself in complete possession of the Philadelphia, and commanded upon the same deck where his gallant father had commanded before him. But in life, he was in the midst of death. He could not move the frigate, for there was no wind—he

could not tow her out of the harbour, for he had not sufficient strength. The Bashaw's troops commenced a tremendous fire from their batteries and the castle upon the frigate. The gun-boats were arranged in the harbour; and the two corsairs near her were pouring their fire into her starboard quarter. Decatur and his gallant companions remained in the frigate, cool and collected, fully covinced that *that* was the only place where they could defend themselves. Finding it totally impossible to withstand, for any length of time, such a tremendous cannonade as was now bearing upon him, he resolved to set the frigate on fire in every one of her most combustible parts, and run the hazard of escaping, with his officers and seamen, in the little Intrepid, which still lay along side of her. It was a moment, pregnant with the most *awful*, or the most *happy* consequences to these gallant heroes. After the conflagration commenced, Decatur and his associates entered the Ketch as it increased, and for some time were in imminent danger of being blown up with her. As if heaven smiled upon the conclusion of this enterprise, as it seemed to frown upon its beginning, a favourable breeze at this moment arose, which blew the Intrepid directly out of the reach of the enemy's cannon, and enabled Decatur, his officers and seamen, to behold, at a secure distance, the furious flames and rolling columns of smoke, which issued from the Philadelphia. As the flames heated the loaded cannon in the frigate, they were discharged, one after the other —those pointing into the harbour without any injury, and those pointing into the city of Tripoli, to the great

damage and consternation of the barbarous wretches who had loaded them to destroy our countrymen.

It is wholly impossible for those unaccustomed to scenes like this, to form a conception of the feelings of Decatur and his comrades upon this occasion. Their safe retreat was next to a resurrection from the dead. Not an American was slain in the desperate rencontre, and but four were wounded. Commodore Preble might well exclaim to Lieut. Decatur upon joining his squadron, as an ancient Baron to his favourite Knight—

"Welcome to my arms; thou art *twice* a conqueror,
"For thou bringest home *full* numbers."

Equally impossible is it to imagine the feelings of Capt. Bainbridge and his companions in bondage upon this almost miraculous event. They heard the roar of cannon in their gloomy dungeon, and saw the gleaming light of the flames; but knew not the cause. Upon learning the cheering tidings, joy converted their chains and cords to silked threads. It was a presage of their deliverance, and foretold to them a glorious ubilee.

The highest reward a gallant and aspiring officer can recoive is PROMOTION; and to *promote*, is the most difficult duty of our government. If by a successful enterprise like that just described, a junior officer attracts the attention of his government, and excites the admiration of his countrymen, the first naturally expects promotion, and the last, so far as they can, seem to demand it. Senior officers, not having had an *opportunity* to signalize themselves, feel the very excess of mortification at seeing a junior carried over their heads for

any reason whatever. It was this that all but drove the gallant and lamented Lawrence to a resignation. It would be a digression to detail the particulars; they are familiar with every critical reader of our naval history. At the time of Decatur's first, and in the estimation of some, his greatest achievement, there was no intermediate grade between a first Lieutenant and that of Post-Captain, to which he was promoted for the destruction of the Philadelphia. The most convincing evidence I can furnish of the very high estimation in which Decatur, thus early in life, was holden by his brother officers, who were his seniors, is, that they voluntarily consented, that he should be promoted *over* them; thus furnishing "confirmation, strong as proof of holy writ," of the consummate skill and gallantry of Decatur, and of the exalted magnanimity of his brother officers.

Capt. Decatur, remained with the squadron of Com. Preble at their rendezvous until the spring of 1804, enjoying with his admiring comrades the high reputation he had acquired. Far, however, from being satisfied with one glorious achievement, he only considered it as the *beginning* of a life of glory.

The unvarying modesty of all our naval champions, has become proverbial. It is not that affected modesty which made Cæsar for a time decline a crown, and then accept of it; but that real dignified modesty which is a concomitant with real and exalted worth. So far from gasconading boasting, they seldom speak of themselves or their achievements; and instead of monopolizing the applause which the world is anxious to bestow upon them, they rather seem solicitous that their

comrades should fully participate with them in the fame they have acquired. A literary correspondent of the writer when requested to furnish some memoranda of one of our most distinguished Post-Captains, thus expresses himself:—"*With respect to anecdotes drawn from private communications, as far as my own observation has extended, Capt.* ********** *is a man of such singular modesty, that in the course of an unreserved acquaintance with him for some years, I do not remember ever having heard him speak, in detail, of any incidents connected with such of his own actions as reflect lustre on himself, or are highly interesting to the public*". A more perfect picture of Capt. Decatur could not be drawn. He always seemed to have forgotten what he *had* accomplished, and only looked *forward* to the temple of Fame, through the long and brilliant vista of deeds of immortal renown.

Com. Preble, fully sensible of the deficiency of his squadron in vessels of a smaller class, negociated with the king of Naples for the loan of two bombards, and six gun-boats. Nelson, when commanding immense squadrons of ships of the line declared that "*Frigates were the eyes of a fleet;*" and gun-boats were to Preble, what frigates were to him. This great man, and veteran officer, had the scantiest *means* to accomplish a most important *end*. But as the gallant Henry V. with his little army before Agincourt "wished not for another man from England," so Preble wished not for another keel, another gun, or another man from America. His noble soul converted his little squadron into a powerful fleet, and, surrounded by such officers as Decatur, Somers, Stewart, Lawrence, Morris, Macdonough, Trippe,

and *others*, then less known, and perhaps equally gallant, his comrades were magnified into a mighty host.

While Com. Preble was thus preparing to negociate with the tyrannous and murderous Jussuff at the mouth of his cannon, and to send his *ultimatum* in powder and ball, Mr. William Eaton, who had previously been a consul from America up the Mediterranean, conceived the daring and romantic project of restoring *Hamet Caramalli* to the throne of Tripoli which had been usurped by the reigning Bashaw. Hamet had relinquished all hopes of regaining a throne which had always been acquired by blood and assassination. Like a philosopher, he had retired to Egypt, where the Beys of that ancient kingdom extended to him their protection and their hospitality. To use his own language as translated into ours he—" *reposed in the security of peace—had almost ceased to repine for the loss of his throne, and regretted only the lot of his unhappy people, doomed to the yoke of his cruel and tyrannical brother.*" Novel language this, to be sure, in the mouth of an *Ishmaelitish Mahometan!* How much his " unhappy people" would have been benefitted by his reign, cannot now be determined; as he is not amongst the " legitimate sovereigns" who have in later times waded through the blood of their own subjects to thrones from which they were driven by the public voice;—thrones which tremble beneath them, and which they maintain only by the strong arm of power.

Some few Americans from the American squadron, joined Eaton, and, many natives of various tribes, languages and colours flocked to his standard. A motley sort of an army was thus formed, and Eaton placed

himself at their head as a General. He repaired to Alexandria, and found the feeble Caramalli, as just mentioned "*reposing in security and peace.*" Fortunate indeed had it been for him, if he had remained in safety by continuing in obscurity. Few instances are left us upon record of princes who have been exiled from their thrones and kingdoms, who have enjoyed either of them upon their restoration. The houses of *Stuart*, *Bourbon* and *Braganzi* furnish the commentary. The expiring hopes of Caramalli, were brightened up by the ardent and romantic Eaton as a sudden gust elicits a spark from the faint glimmering light in the socket. He cast a longing eye toward the dangerous throne of Tripoli, more than half a thousand miles distant, between which and himself stretched an immense desert second only in barrenness and desolation to that of *Zahara*. But nothing could repress the ardour of Eaton. The idea of an American, taking from the land where Pharaoh once held the children of Israel in captivity, an exiled prince, and placing him upon the throne of a distant kingdom, had something in it so outrageously captivating, that the enthusiastic mind of the chivalrous Eaton was lost to every other consideration.

The grateful Caramalli, if an Ishmaelite can be grateful, took leave of his Egyptian friends, and placed himself under the banner of Eaton. He entered into a *convention* with the General, by which he *promised* immense favours to the Americans, and to make the engagements reciprocal, the General *promised* to restore him to his throne. This *diplomatic arrangement* was doubtless mutually satisfactory to the parties, although

the American and Tripolitan governments had no hand in this *negociation.*

Caramalli, his General, and a great assemblage of incongruous materials, called an army, moved across the deserts ; and *endured* every thing which they might have *anticipated* from the nature of the country. After passing about six hundred miles they reached the city of *Derne*, which they triumphantly entered, and at least found some repose and a supply for their immediate wants.

The reigning Bashaw, in the mean time, had augmented his garrisons to three thousand Turkish troops, and an army of more than twenty thousand Arabs were encamped in the neighbourhood of the strong city of Tripoli. However contemptuously he might smile at the force which surrounded his approaching brother, by land, and however little he cared for the loss of the little city of Derne, a "fearful looking for of judgment" harrowed his guilty soul, when he beheld the whole of Com. Preble's squadron, upon the first week of August, approaching the harbour of Tripoli.

He had seen the gallant Capt. Decatur, in his bay, capture one of his corsairs.—He had seen the same warriour, with the same corsair, destroy his heaviest ship of war, under the very guns of his batteries and castle, surrounded also by his marine force. The name of DECATUR sounded in his ear, like the knell of his parting glory ; and when he saw the broad pendant of PREBLE, waving upon that wonder-working ship the CONSTITUTION, and surrounded by Brigs, Bombards, and Gun-boats, he almost despaired. He had the crew of the Philadelphia, and many other Americans, in wretch-

ed bondage. Determining to extort an enormous ransom for the prisoners, from the American government, to enable him to support the vain and gorgeous pageantry of royalty, he demanded the sum of *six hundred thousand dollars* for their emancipation, and an annual *tribute*, as the price of peace. This, Mr. Lear indignantly rejected. He left it with such *negociators* as Preble, Decatur, &c. to make the *interchange of powers*, and to agree upon the *preliminaries* of a treaty.

After having stated that the *whole* of Com. Preble's squadron laid before Tripoli, the reader may have been led to suppose that it was a very formidable force. But to prepare the mind to follow him and his comrades into the harbour, and to pursue him to the very mouths of the Bashaw's cannon upon his batteries, in his castle, and on board his corsairs, gun-boats, and other marine force, mounting little less than three hundred cannon—Let it be remembered that *his* whole squadron, including the Neapolitan bombards and gun-boats, mounted less guns than one completely armed Seventy-Four, and one Frigate. His squadron consisted of one frigate, three brigs, (one of which had been captured from the enemy,) three schooners, two bombards, and six gun-boats. His men amounted to a very little over one thousand, a considerable number of whom were Neapolitans upon whom he could place but little reliance in a close engagement with Turks. But he felt like a warricur—and knew that Americans were such.

"————————From hearts so firm,
Whom dangers fortify, and toils inspire,
What has a leader not to hope?"

# CHAPTER IX.

*Lieutenant* Decatur promoted to the rank of CAPTAIN—Preparations for a general attack upon Tripoli—Capt. Decatur takes command of a division of Gun-boats—Disparity of force between his and the enemy's—He grapples and captures a Tripolitan boat—Is bearing for the squadron with his prize—Hears of the treacherous murder of his brother, Lieut. James Decatur—Returns to the engagement, and followed by Midshipman Macdonough and nine seamen, boards the enemy's boat—Slays the Turk who slew his brother, and bears his second prize to the squadron—Other achievements of the Squadron, Bombards, and Gun-boats—Effects of the attack upon the Bashaw, and Tripolitans.

Capt. Decatur, at this time, (August 1804) was placed in the *first* grade of officers in the American Navy; and, to remind him of the gallant achievement for which he was there placed, his commission bore date the memorable 16th day of February, 1804. He also received a vote of thanks, expressed in the most applauding terms, and also an elegant sword, for the destruction of the Philadelphia frigate. These high honours were *amongst the first* of this nature bestowed upon the officers of the Navy. They were more gratifying to such a mind as Decatur's, than it would have been to have captured a fleet of merchantmen, and to have shared largely in the prizes. Far from being elated with these unequivocal tokens of the approbation of his government and commander, he sought only to shew the world, by his *future* conduct, that he deserved them.

There being but one frigate in the squadron, and

that commanded by Commodore Preble, there was yet no national ship in the Mediterranean, of a *rate* that corresponded with Captain Decatur's *grade*. But little did he care in what sort of vessel he served his country, so be it he could efficiently aid in compelling the imperious Jussuff to bow to American prowess; and, after being humiliated, to release from bondage the noble and gallant Bainbridge—his gallant officers and seamen—and all the Americans holden in Mahometan slavery.

Commodore Preble had made the best possible preparations he could, with his limited means, to effect his ultimate object. The two preceding squadrons sent from America to the Mediterranean under Commodores Dale and Morris had gone but little beyond mere blockading ships—for this was all they could do. The American government, in the season of 1804 used every exertion to prepare a respectable augmentation to Commodore Preble's squadron, and in the mean time he was preparing to make "demonstrations" upon Tripoli rather more impressive than those made by ten times his force upon fort *Mc'Henry*, fort *Bowyer*, and fort *St. Phillip* by immense British squadrons, in the war of 1812 in America.

After having been baffled for a long time by adverse winds, he reached the harbour of Tripoli in the last week of July. The Bashaw affected to disguise the real apprehensions he felt by exclaiming to his courtiers—"*They will mark their distance for tacking—they are a sort of Jews who have no notion of fighting.*" He had not yet sufficiently studied the American character; and needed a few more lessons from Decatur to enable

him thoroughly to comprehend it. He was soon to learn that Americans upon the ocean were not like the children of Israel, or the descendants of Ishmael.

Captain Decatur was selected by Commodore Preble to command one division of the Gun-boats, and Lieut. Somers the other. The duty imposed upon them was of a nature the most hazardous ; as from the little water they drew, they could come almost into contact with the Bashaw's batteries and castle, where the numerous gun-boats of the Tripolitans were stationed. As this was one of the most desperate engagements amongst the numerous ones in which Capt. Decatur was ever called to display his personal prowess as well as his nautical skill and desperate courage, the reader will indulge the writer in detailing it particularly, as related to him by one of the officers on board the Constitution, lying in full view of the bloody scene.

The bombards, each carrying a mortar of thirteen inches, were commanded, one by Lieut. Commandant Dent, and the other by first Lieut. Robinson, of the Constitution. The Gun-boats were thus arranged, mounting each a brass twenty-six pounder.

| SECOND DIVISION. | FIRST DIVISION. |
|---|---|
| Boat No. IV. Capt. Decatur | No. I. Lieut. Somers |
| No. V. Lieut. Bainbridge | No. II. Lieut. J. Decatur |
| No. VI. Lieut. Trippe | No. III. Lieut. Blake |

The Constitution, the Brigs and the Schooners, were to be situated to cover them from the fire of the batteries and the castle, and to silence the tremendous cannonade expected from more than two hundred pieces of heavy ordnance mounted in them, and on the marine force of the enemy. Although the squadron had

been long in the Mediterranean, the unceasing vigilance and assiduity of Com. Preble, Capt. Decatur, and the rest of the officers and seamen, had kept it in the most complete preparation for any service. The Bashaw was also prepared to receive them, and, (as he confidently expected,) to repulse them. Preble had not the most distant wish to enter the city with his small force. He was determined, if possible, to destroy the naval force, the batteries, and the castle of the enemy, and conquer them into peace upon his chosen element.

Upon the 3d of August, the gales had subsided, and the Commodore resolved to commence an attack. The disparity of force between Preble and the Bashaw at Tripoli was much greater than that of Nelson and the king of Denmark at Copenhagen. At about half past ten o'clock, the two bombards from signals previously arranged, stood in for the town, followed by the whole squadron, in the most gallant style. More than two hundred of the Bashaw's guns were brought to bear directly upon the American squadron. Included in this force of the enemy, were one heavy armed Brig—two Schooners—two large Gallies, and *nineteen* Gunboats each of superior force to those commanded by Capt. Decatur and Lieut. Somers; as they mounted each a twenty-four brass pounder in the bow, and two smaller guns in the stern.—The number of men in each boat of the enemy, were *forty*. In the six boats of our squadron, were twenty-seven Americans, and thirteen Neapolitans each; but as the latter, in close engagement, remained aghast in awe-struck astonishment, and declined boarding, they were of but little service.

Thus, then, at the commencement of the engagement between the rival gun-boats, the different forces stood :

| *American.* | | | *Tripolitan.* | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Gun-boats 6, Guns 6. | | | Gun-boats | 18 |
| Americans 162 | Officers and Seamen | 240 | Guns | 57 |
| Neapolitans 78 | | | Officers and Seamen | 760 |

To "*make assurance doubly sure*," the enemy's gun-boats were stationed directly under cover of the Bashaw's batteries, and within gun-shot of them. So perfectly confident were their commanders of a decisive victory, that the sails of every one of them had been removed. Com. Preble had so placed his squadron as to afford every possible aid to his two Bombards, and his six Gun-boats ; but his ulterior object was to pour his heaviest shot into the batteries, the castle and the town,—knowing that if he dismayed the boasting Bashaw in his den, his affrighted slaves would flee in promiscuous consternation.

The elevated roof of the palace,—the terraces of the houses, and every building capable of sustaining spectators were crowded to overflowing, to behold the triumph of Mahometans over Christians.

At a little before 3 o'clock, the gallant Commodore made signal for general action. The bombards advanced ; and with a precision and rapidity, perfectly astonishing, poured their shells into the city. The immense force of the Bashaw immediately opened their whole batteries upon the squadron, from the land and in the harbour. The Constitution, the Brigs, and Schooners advanced within musket-shot of them, and answered the fire of the enemy.

Capt. Decatur, in the leading gun-boat of his division, followed by Lieutenants Bainbridge and Trippe, in Nos. 5 and 6, bore impetuously into the midst of the enemy's windward division of nine Gun-boats, consisting of the men and guns before mentioned. He had previously ordered his three boats to unship their bowsprit, as he and his dauntless comrades resolved to board the enemy. Lieut. Somers and his division were to follow and support Capt. Decatur's; but his and Lieut. Blake's boats had fallen so far to leeward that it was impossible. Lieut. *James Decatur*, of No. II. however, brought his boat into his *intrepid* brother's division, and entered into the engagement nearly at the same time with him. A contest more unequal cannot be imagined. As soon as the contending boats were brought into contact with each other, the discharge of the cannon and musketry on board of them almost entirely ceased, and the more bloody and destructive struggle with swords, sabres, espontoons, spears, scimitars, and other deadly weapons succeeded. Capt. Decatur grappled an enemy's boat, full armed and full manned—leaped on board her—was followed by only fifteen Americans (little more than one third of the Tripolitans in numbers) and in the space of ten minutes made her his prize.

At this moment the American Gun-boats were brought within range of the Bashaw's batteries, which opened a tremendous cannonade upon them. Commodore Preble, perceiving the imminent danger, and the almost inevitable destruction of Capt. Decatur's division of boats, immediately ordered the signal for retreat to be made. In the heat of the battle of Copen-

hagen, Lord Parker ordered the signal for retreat to be made. One of Nelson's officers observed it, and reminded the Admiral of the circumstance. He immediately raised his glass to his stone-blind eye—declared he "*could not see it*"—and, at the hazard of his life, for disobedience of orders, gained one of his greatest victories. It was not so with the no less valiant Decatur. Amongst the numerous signals on board the Commodore's ship, that for the retreat of the boats had been omitted. The dauntless Preble then advanced with the Constitution, the Brigs, and the Schooners, to within three cable's length of the batteries—completely silenced them by a few broadsides, and covered the retreat of the Gun-boats with their prizes.

But a duty, encircled with peril without a parallel—an achievement to be performed without an equal—a display of affection surpassing the tales of romance—and the sudden execution of vengeance upon trangression remained for Capt. Decatur, before he left the blood-stained harbour of Tripoli.

His gallant brother, Lieut. James Decatur, no less daring than himself, had captured a Tripolitan Gunboat; and, after it was surrendered to him, its commander, with diabolical perfidiousness, combined with dastardly ferocity, shot him dead, just as he was stepping upon the deck! While the Americans were recovering the body of their slain commander, the Turk escaped with the prize-boat. As Capt. Decatur was bearing his prize triumphantly out of the harbour, this heart-rending catastrophe was communicated to him.

Instinctive vengeance sudden as the electric shock, took possession of his naturally humane and philan-

thropic soul. It was no time for pathetic lamentation. The mandate of nature and of nature's God cried aloud in his ear—"AVENGE A BROTHER'S BLOOD." With a celerity, almost supernatural, he changed his course—rushed within the enemy's *whole line* with his *single boat*, with the gallant Macdonough and nine men only as his crew!! His previous desperate rencontres, scarcely paralleled, and never surpassed in any age or country, seem like safety itself, when compared with what immediately followed. Like an ancient knight, in the days of chivalry, he scorned, on an occasion like this, to tarnish his sword with the blood of vassals. His first object was to board the boat that contained the base and treacherous commander, whose hands still smoaked with the blood of his murdered brother. This gained, he forced his way through a crew of Turks, quadruple the number of his own, and, like an avenging messenger of the King of Terrors, singled out the guilty victim. The strong and powerful Turk, first assailed him with a long espontoon, heavily ironed at the thrusting end. In attempting to cut off the staff, Captain Decatur furiously struck the ironed part of the weapon, and broke his sword at the hilt. The Turk made a violent thrust, and wounded Decatur in his sword arm and right breast. He suddenly wrested the weapon from the hand of his gigantic antagonist; and, as one "*doubly arm'd who hath his quarrel just*," he closed with him; and, after a long, fierce, and doubtful struggle, prostrated him upon the deck. During this struggle, one of Decatur's crew, who had lost the use of both arms by severe wounds, beheld a

Turk, with an immense sabre, aiming a fatal blow at his adored commander. He immediately threw his mutilated body between the falling sabre and his Captain's head—received a severe fracture in his own, and saved for his country one of its most distinguished champions, to fight its future battles upon the ocean.

While Decatur and the Turk were struggling for life in the very throat of death, the exasperated and infuriated crews rushed impetuously forward in defence of their respective Captains. The Turk drew a concealed dagger from its sheath, which Decatur seized at the moment it was entering his heart—drew his own pistol from his pocket, and instantly sent his furious foe—

> "To his long account, unanointed, unaneal'd,
> "With all his sins and imperfections on his head."

Thus ended a conflict, feebly described, but dreadful in the extreme. Capt. Decatur and all his men were severely wounded but four. The Turks lay killed and wounded in heaps around him. The boat was a floating Golgotha for the dead, and a bloody arena for the wounded and dying. Capt. Decatur bore his second prize out of the harbour, as he had the first amidst a shower of ill directed shot from the astonished and bewildered enemy; and conducted them both to the squadron. On board the two prizes, there were *thirty-three* officers and men killed, more than *double* the number of Americans under Decatur, at any one time in close engagement. *Twenty-seven* were made prisoners, *nineteen* of whom were desperately wounded

—the whole a miserable off-set for the blood of Lieut. Decatur, treacherously slain. The blood of all Tripoli could not atone for it, nor a perpetual pilgrimage to Mecca wash away the bloody stain.

While thus particular in describing this unparralleled achievement of Captain Decatur, it is impossible to overlook the achievements of his other associates in the Gun-boats. The gallant and lamented Lieut. Somers, as he could not join Decatur as ordered, with his *single* boat No. 1. attacked *five* full armed and full manned Tripolitan Gun-boats—committed dreadful slaughter amongst them, and drove them upon the rocks in a condition dreadfully shattered. Lieut. Trippe, whose name will forever be associated with courage, as well as that of Midshipman Henly, with only *nine* men beside themselves, rushed on board an enemy's Gun-boat —slew *fourteen*, and made twenty-two prisoners, seven of whom were badly wounded. Lieut. Trippe received eleven sabre wounds. Lieut. Bainbridge, also distinguished himself for saving his disabled boat and gallant crew from almost certain destruction,—and beating off the enemy.

The Bombards, by the rapid and accurate directions of shells, spread as much consternation in the city as the squadron did in the harbour. The skillful and fearless Comm. Preble, in the noble Constitution, keeping his ship in easy motion, was found wherever the greatest danger threatened; and by frequently wearing and tacking, gave perpetual annoyance to the enemy, and afforded to the smaller vessels of his squadron, constant protection.

The enemy, driven to desperation, by the loss of

their boats, and by the numerous hosts of their comrades slain upon land, as well as those who fell under their immediate view, attempted to rally, and regain what they had lost. They were suddenly foiled by the Brigs and Schooners, who acted a no less gallant part in this desperate ocean-affray than all the rest of this immortalized squadron. They attempted a second time; and met with a second repulse. Finding that no naval power in the *Mediterranean* could withstand an *American* squadron, they sought a covert under rocks, a *natural*, and under batteries and castles, *artificial* defences.

At a little before 5 o'clock, the whole squadron, with their prizes, and prisoners, moved majestically out of the harbour; and left the Bashaw to examine and reflect upon the consequences of the *third* visit which DECATUR had made him; the last, under the immediate command of the veteran Preble, his commander in chief.

The reader, who has past his early, advanced, and closing years of life, in the tranquil scenes of retirement, can form but a faint idea of the sensations of the officers and seamen of Comm. Preble's squadron, when they met each other after this desperate and most unequal combat. Every one would naturally enquire —"How many were killed and wounded in the Frigate—how many in the different Brigs, Schooners, Bombards and Gun-boats." It was for Capt. Decatur to make the answer. "*Many* are *wounded* my comrades, but not *one* is *slain*, but my brother." He might have said,—"*If you have tears to shed, shed them now.*" Well might the tears of grief be mingled with the smiles of

triumph upon this saddening intelligence. "*Death loves a shining mark*"—and when JAMES DECATUR fell, the American Navy lost a brilliant ornament—Comm. Preble a favorite officer—Capt. Decatur a brother he loved as he did himself, and our Republic a most gallant and accomplished ocean-warriour. But like Nelson, he died in the arms of victory, and his death was most signally avenged.

As represented by an officer of the Constitution, when Captain Decatur, Lieut. Trippe, Macdonough, Henley and most of the officers and seamen, belonging to the Gun-boats joined the squadron, they looked as if they had just escaped from the slaughter-house. Their truly noble blood was mingled with that of Mahometans and crimsoned the garbs of those who would never be stained with dishonour.

The injury sustained by the squadron sinks into nothing, when the danger it was exposed to is considered. This was owing to the consummate nautical skill and coolness of our officers and seamen, and to the stupid, sullen ignorance and consternation of the enemy. To them the 3rd of August was a day of dreadful retribution. A furious tornado not more suddenly drives the feathered race to their coverts, than did the first discharges from our squadron, the frenzied Turks, who came to witness its discomfiture. From the representation of an intelligent officer, once of the Philadelphia, then a prisoner to the Bashaw; it is learned, that every one in the city fled who could flee. Even the troops in the batteries and castle dared not mount the parapet to discharge the cannon. The affrighted Bashaw, with a Mahometan priest, concealed himself in his bomb-

proof room; and undoubtedly responded to the roar of *Christian cannon* by pitiful orisons to the *Prophet of Mecca*. It was as fruitless as the prayers of the Philistines to Dagon or Ashdod. His slaves who had no covert, buried themselves in sand to escape the bursting bombs. Although it was a scene of blood and carnage, there is enough of the ludicrous in it to excite a smile in the American reader. It clearly evinces that those who are most boastful and imperious, when possessed of real or supposed power, are the most mean, pusillanimous, and contemptible, when convinced of their weakness.

I will here present the reader with the sentiments of a distinguished Turk, in the language of an American officer, then a prisoner. He asked the officer—"If those men that fought so were *Americans*, or *infernals* in *Christian* shape sent to destroy the sons of Mahomet the prophet? The English, French, and Spanish consuls have told us that they are a young nation, and got their independence by means of France. That they had a small navy, and their officers were inexperienced; and that they were merely a nation of merchants; and that by taking their ships and men, we should get great ransoms.—Instead of this, their PREBLE pays us a coin of shot, shells, and hard blows; and sent a DECATUR in a dark night, with a band of Christian dogs, fierce and cruel as the tyger, who killed our brothers and burnt our ships before our eyes."*

By this first attack, the city of Tripoli suffered considerable damage. Many of the guns were dismount-

* American Biographical Dictionary.

ed, and many Turks were slain. But it was in the Bashaw's marine force, where the most destructive blow was struck. In the two prizes taken by Capt. Decatur, and the one by Lieut. Trippe, there were, originally, one hundred and twenty men. Forty-seven were killed—twenty-six wounded, who with the remainder, were taken prisoners. Three full-manned boats were sunk, with every soul on board; and almost every deck of the enemy's vessels, within the range of American cannon, were swept of their crews.

In consequence of the destruction of the Philadelphia frigate by Decatur, the barbarism of Jussuff, the bloody Bashaw, was increased against Capt. Bainbridge and his officers and seamen in bondage. But Commodore Preble and Capt. Decatur, aided by the magnanimous and philanthropic exertions of Sir Alexander Ball, once a favorite officer with Nelson, and then at the Island of Malta, found means to alleviate the dismal gloom of their bondage. A gallant naval commander like Sir Alexander Ball, could not endure the thought that a gallant hero like Bainbridge and his noble crew, should suffer indignity or abuse from such a sanguinary wretch as Jussuff and his slaves.

After the 3rd of August, the humbled Bashaw began to relent. But his conviction was more the result of alarming fears, than of a consciousness of guilt. The noble hearted Decatur treated his wounded prisoners with the greatest humanity. Their wounds were dressed with the utmost care; and, upon the 5th, he persuaded Commodore Preble to send fourteen of them home to their friends. In a generous bosom, although an enemy, such an act would have excited inexpressi-

ble admiration; and although a species of revenge calculated to "*heap coals of fire upon the head*" of a subdued enemy, yet it must have melted an heart of adamant. The Bashaw knew that one of his officers had basely slain the brother of the exalted Decatur; and could not comprehend the motives of *his* humanity. His savage subtilty augured evil, even from an act of pure benevolence. But when he heard the restored and wounded Tripolitans exclaim in the rapture of *enforced* gratitude—"*The Americans in battle are fiercer than lions, and after victory, kinder than Mussulmen*" his savage heart began to soften. But, without a great ransom, he would not release a single prisoner who belonged to the Philadelphia frigate.

From the 3rd to the 7th of August, Comm. Preble, Capt. Decatur, and the rest of the officers and seamen, had but little time for repose after their arduous toils in reaching the harbour of Tripoli, and administering to the Bashaw a portion of American vengeance. They were all incessantly engaged in preparing for another visit. Capt. Decatur had become perfectly familiar with the theatre of action on which the American squadron was now acting its various parts. Every scene was drawing toward the developement of the tragedy. The imperious tone of the Bashaw was lowered, as his hopes of safety diminished. He however would surrender no prisoners without a ransom beyond what Comm. Preble thought himself authorised by his government to offer. He rather preferred to have Consul Lear negociate upon land; and he felt confident of his powers to negociate with his invincible squadron.

Capt. Decatur, indeed all the officers of every grade, and every seaman, exerted every nerve to aid Comm. Preble. They stood around him like affectionate and obedient children around a beloved and dignified parent, anxious to learn his precepts, and prompt to obey his commands. He stood in the midst of them in the double capacity of their father, and a representative of his and their country. He knew they would follow wherever he would lead, and would lead where necessary prudence would prevent him from following. Well might the astonished Turks compare them to lions; for they had proved themselves irresistible in battle—generous and noble in victory.

# CHAPTER X.

Capt. Decatur receives high commendations from Comm. Preble--Grief at the death of Lieut. J. Decatur—Notice of him—Proposals of the Commodore to the Bashaw—Renewal of the attack upon Tripoli—Capt. Somers, Lieuts. Wadsworth and Israel enter into the squadron of the enemy's boats with the Ketch *Intrepid* as a fire ship—She explodes!—Awful effects of the explosion—Reflection--Notice of Lieut. Wadsworth--Com. Preble superseded by Comm. Barron—Brief notice of EDWARD PREBLE.

Capt. Decatur, having thus far taken such a distinguished and leading part in all the gallant achievements in the naval warfare of America against Tripoli, it became indispensably necessary to be somewhat minute in describing *them*, in order to present *him* to the reader.

For his unparalleled bravery, desperate courage, and unequalled success in the battle of the 3rd of August, Comm. Preble could bestow nothing but his highest and most unqualified commendation. This was not the mere effusion of an admiring commander, surrounded by his victorious comrades around the festive board, after a signal victory, but it was *officially* announced to the whole squadron, in a "general order" upon the 4th. The Commodore knew well where to bestow applause, and when to *make* or rather to *recommend* promotion. His general order is in the Navy Department; and as to promotion it was out of the question, as Decatur, although but twenty-five years of age, had reached the highest grade in the American Navy.

Amidst the congratulations in the squadron for the successful issue of the first attack upon Tripoli, a silent gloom irresistably pervaded the hearts of the officers and seamen. It was not caused by contemplating upon the arduous and yet uncertain contest which they were directly to renew. Inured to duty, and familiar with victory, they were total strangers to fear. But Lieut. JAMES DECATUR "was dead!" While *they* were floating triumphantly upon the waves of the Mediterranean, *his* body was reposing in death upon its bed, and his gallant spirit had flown to heaven. The shouts of joy over all Britain for the victory of Trafalgar, were mingled with groans of grief for the death of Nelson. No less pungent was the sorrow of intrepid Americans at the fall of Lieut. Decatur.

He had unremittingly pursued the duty of the naval profession from the time he entered the navy, until the day he was basely and treacherously slain. It is inconsistent with the design of this volume, to go into a minute detail of *his* life. The life of his admired brother is the object of it. Suffice it then to say, that by a long course of assiduous duty, in various ships of the American navy, and under different commanders, he secured to himself the confidence of his superiors, and the approbation of his government. The post assigned him upon the 3rd of August, evinced the high estimation in which he was holden by the discerning and penetrating Comm. Preble. The manner in which he discharged the duty imposed upon him, and the manner in which he fell, have already been mentioned. His memory is embalmed with those of Somers, Wadsworth and Israel, who followed him into eternity, thir-

ty days after he left the world, and who made their exit from the same sanguinary theatre upon which he fell.

The fearful, yet temporising Bashaw, through the medium of a foreign consul, offered terms to Preble which he indignantly rejected, as degrading to his government. Upon the 7th, another attack was resolved upon, and the squadron arranged in order to execute it. The effect desired, was produced. A heavy battery was silenced—many bomb-shells and round shot were thrown into the town—and, although the damage to the enemy was not so essential as the attack of the 3rd, it increased the dismay of the Bashaw.—Amongst the Gun-boats engaged in this second attack, was one taken from the enemy by Decatur. She was blown up by a hot ball sent from the batteries, and Lieut. Caldwell, Midshipman Dorsey and eight seamen were killed; six were wounded; and Midshipman Spence, with eleven seamen were rescued unhurt from the waves.

Two days afterwards Commodore Preble took a deliberate view of the harbour in one of the Brigs, in order to determine the best mode of commencing a *third* attack. He gave "no sleep to the eyes nor slumber to the eyelids" of the sullen and incorrigible wretch who wielded the sceptre of blood-begotten power over his subjects, the wretched and degraded race of beings, who were dragging out a miserable existence in Tripoli. The hopes of the American prisoners increased, as those of the Bashaw and his troops diminished. The terms for ransom were lowered more than two thirds; but Preble and Decatur had become stern

negociators; and Mr. Lear chose to let them continue *their* diplomatic skill.

The prospects of a protracted warfare—at an immense expense to the American government; the tedious and gloomy imprisonment of nearly half a thousand Americans in the dungeons of a barbarian, amongst whom were some of the noblest hearts that ever beat in human bosoms—the probability that more American blood must be shed in effecting a complete subjugation of the yet unyielding Bashaw, induced Comm. Preble to offer the sum of *eighty thousand dollars* as a ransom for the prisoners, and *ten thousand dollars* as presents, provided he would enter into a solemn and perpetual treaty with the American government never to demand an annual tribute as the price of peace.

The infatuated and infuriated Bashaw rejected these proposals with *affected* disdain mingled with *real* fear. Comm. Preble had nothing now to do but to renew his naval operations. He could entertain no rational hopes from the romantic and chivalrous attempt of Gen. Eaton, who had entered Derne with the *Ex-Bashaw* Caramalli; and with *whom he* had made a treaty. This unfortunate prince with his gallant general and his rabble-army could no sooner have entered the city of Tripoli by land, guarded by more than 20,000 well armed Arabs, than one of the reigning Bashaw's gallies could have sunk the frigate Constitution.* He therefore left

* See Chap. VIII. However much the reader may admire the almost unparalleled exertions of *Eaton* in the cause of *Caramalli*, and regret the misfortunes of both, still the cool and reflecting statesman could never give his sanction to a project, so extreme-

it wholly with the American consul to arrange affairs with the august court of Tripoli, while he was determined to "manage his own affairs in his own way" with his squadron in the harbour.

Capt. Decatur, the next in command to Comm. Preble, his confidential adviser, and the idol of every American in the squadron, stimulated the whole to the exertion of their utmost energy. To repel the idea that the pacific offer of the Commodore arose from apprehensions of defeat, the bombards occasionally disgorged their destructive contents into the city; when upon the 27th Aug. *another* general attack was made with such effect as to induce the Bashaw to renew negociations for peace, but nothing definitive was effected. Upon the 3d September, *another* attack was made to the very great injury of the Bashaw's batteries, castle and city.

Although but few Americans had lost their lives in the various battles, yet the vessels of the squadron had suffered very considerable injury. Capt. Decatur proposed that the Ketch *Intrepid*, so often mentioned, which he had captured himself, and with which he had destroyed the Philadelphia frigate, should be converted into a *fire ship*, and sent into the midst of the enemy's gallies and gun-boats to complete their destruction. To this the Commodore acceded—loaded her with one hundred barrels of powder, and one hundred and fifty shells; and fixed upon the night of the memorable 4th of September, for the daring and hazardous attempt.

Capt. Decatur would gladly have commanded the

ly difficult of accomplishment, with means so wholly incompetent. Eaton will never be forgotten; but he will be remembered as a victim to his own romantic ambition.

expedition, and probably from his seniority might have claimed the command; but his generosity to his beloved brother officers induced him to wave an opportunity of adding another to the numerous laurels that composed the garland of victory upon his brow. Capt. Somers volunteered his services and was designated as the commander; he was immediately joined by Lieuts. Wadsworth and Israel, and a sufficient number of gallant seamen.

Although Capt. Decatur was but a spectator of the awfully tremendous scene that followed, the reader may be gratified by a succinct account of it as related by an accomplished eye-witness, to the writer. The evening was unusually calm, and the sea scarcely presented the smallest wave to the eye. That part of the squadron which was not designated as a convoy to the Intrepid lay in the outer harbour. Two swift sailing boats were attached to the Intrepid, and the Argus, Vixen and Nautilus, were to conduct them to their destination, and receive the crew after the match was applied to the fatal train. At a little before nine o'clock, the Intrepid, followed by the convoy, moved slowly and silently into the inner harbour. Two of the enemy's heavy gallies, with more than a hundred men each, encountered the fire-ship, unconscious that she was pregnant with concealed magazines of death. They captured her of course as the little crew could not withstand such an overwhelming force for a moment. It being the first prize the Tripolitans had made, the exulting captors were about bearing her and the prisoners triumphantly into port. The crew were to be immured in the same dungeon with Capt. Bainbridge

and his crew, who had worn away eleven tedious months in dismal slavery. To Somers, Wadsworth and Israel,

> "*One hour* of virtuous *liberty* was worth
> An *whole eternity* of *bondage*,"—

and instant death, far preferable to Turkish captivity. It is still left to conjecture and must always be so left, by whom their instantaneous release from slavery and from mortality was occasioned. It is with an agitated heart and a trembling hand that it is recorded, that the Intrepid suddenly exploded and a few gallant Americans with countless numbers of barbarians, met with one common and undistinguished destruction.

It is generally understood by American readers that Capt. Somers, his officers and crew, after being captured, mutually agreed to make voluntary sacrifices of themselves, to avoid slavery and to destroy the enemy. In support of this, the writer is authorised to state that Capt. Somers, directly before entering into this enterprise, declared that "*he would never be captured by the enemy or go into Turkish bondage.*"

It is entirely beyond the reach of the most fertile imagination to form an adequate conception of the reality of this awful scene. The silence that preceded the approach of the Intrepid, was followed by the discharge of cannon and musketry, and ended by the fearful and alarming shock of the explosion. Every living Christian and Mahometan within view or hearing, stood aghast and a we-struck.

For the *first*, the *only*, and the *last* time in his life, Capt. Decatur was excited to a pitch of agonizing distress. With agitated strides he paced his deck—cast his eyes into the harbour where his gallant brother,

thirty days before, was treacherously slain, and contemplated upon the fractured and mangled bodies of Somers, Wadsworth and Israel, sinking to a watery bed with him. If tears may ever be permitted to bedew the cheek of a warrior, it was a time to weep. If he could have avenged the deaths of his brothers by profession, as he had that of a brother by kindred, not a moment would have been spent in unavailing grief. But barbarous enemies and endeared comrades met with one common destiny, and all was an outspread scene of desolation. The remaining part of the night was as silent as the season that immediately succeeds some violent convulsion of nature.

If the biographical writer could be allowed to blend his own "*reflections and remarks*" with the incidents and events he records, this momentous occurrence might justify them. It will, however, only be observed, that Capt. Somers' memory has sometimes been assailed by those whose timid and scrupulous system of morals evinces a "*zeal without knowledge.*" Admitting that he made a voluntary sacrifice of himself, his officers, and his crew, to avenge the injuries of his country and rescue his numerous countrymen, in full view, from bondage. Let the severest casuist that ever perverted the plain dictates of conscience, by metaphysical subtlety, be asked if every man who enters the Navy or Army of his country, does not voluntarily expose himself to death in defending its rights, its honour, and its independence? No matter in what manner death is occasioned, so be it the sacrifice adds to the security and advances the glory of his country. Whether it happens in the midst of opposing hosts,—in single combat,

—or as that of Somers, and his companions did, by voluntary sacrifice, it equally redounds to their glory and their country's weal. To those who form their systems exclusively from the records of inspiration, examples from them might be quoted; and the instance of Sampson alone, who fell with a host of his enemies, will not, by them, be denied as being analagous. The classical reader will immediately recollect that Rome herself was twice saved from destruction by the voluntary sacrifice of the Decii.

The writer hopes to be indulged in a brief allusion to the gallant, the accomplished, the lamented Lieut. Wadsworth, with whom he had the honour and enjoyed the pleasure of some acquaintance. His birth-place and residence was in Portland, the metropolis of the state of Maine, and in the immediate neighbourhood of the great Preble. To a very elegant person, he added the captivating charms of a mind highly refined. His situation placed within his reach all the fascinating enjoyments of fashionable life; but a participation in them, could not render *him* effeminate. The previous examples of Stephen and James Decatur inspired his ardent bosom with a thirst for naval glory, and this was enhanced by the renown acquired by his distinguished townsman, and *naval* father, Comm. Preble. He repaired to the renowned sea, whose waves are bounded by three of the great quarters of the globe, and almost in the sight of which, the American squadron was triumphantly wafting. He did not *envy*, for envy found no place in his noble heart; but he wished to *emulate* the gallant deeds of his brother officers. The disastrous, yet splendid affair of the 4th of September, has

been briefly detailed. Wadsworth upon that fatal, awful night, left the world in a blaze of glory—gave his mangled corse to the waves—his exalted spirit to heaven—and his immortal fame to his country. Although his precious manes are "*Far away o'er the billow*," his virtues and gallantry are commemorated by a monument in his native town, the voluntary tribute of his admiring friends to his inestimable worth.

While the American squadron was achieving such unparralleled deeds in the Mediterranean, the American government, yet unadvised of its splendid success, dispatched an additional squadron to that sea. From the state of the naval register, and the rank of the Post-Captains, the new squadron could not be supplied with officers without designating one who was *senior* to Comm. Preble. This devolved upon Comm. Barron, who arrived upon the 9th of September 1804.

To an aspiring hero just entering the path of fame, and anxious to reach its temple, a sudden check to his progress is like the stroke of death. It was not so with Comm. Preble when he was superseded by Comm. Barron. His work was "done and well done;" and he surrendered the squadron to his senior as Gen. Jackson did his army to Gen. Pinckney, when there was nothing to do but to enjoy the fruits of victory.

He immediately gave the command of his favourite frigate the Constitution, to his favourite officer Capt. Decatur, and obtained leave to return to America.

The parting scene, as described by one who *witnessed* and who *felt* it, was one of the most interesting that the mind can conceive. For more than a year the Commodore and his gallant comrades had been absent from

their beloved country—a *year* which may be denominated an *age* in the *calendar* of our then infant navy—a period of splendid and "successful experiment" with our ships, and of naval instruction and experience to our officers and seamen. Their attachment had become cemented by common toils, common dangers, and common victories. The war-worn and veteran Preble gave the parting hand to his officers as a father to his children, and the signal of departure to his seamen as to a numerous group of admiring domestics. The first manifested a dignified regret, mingled with conscious pride—the last gazed with noble grief, upon the last visible piece of canvass that wafted their beloved commander in chief from their view.

Fully persuaded that the reader may be gratified with a very brief sketch of the life of Capt. Decatur's favourite commander, and his immediate predecessor in the command of the frigate Constitution, it will here be attempted, however imperfectly it may be executed.

Edward Preble was born in the town of Portland, State of Maine, upon the 15th August, 1761. His daring and adventurous spirit in early life, could not be better gratified by his friends, than by procuring for him the birth of a Midshipman in the little naval force suddenly created in the war of the Revolution. In this capacity he entered the ship "*Protector*" Capt. Williams, in 1779, the year of Decatur's birth. The Protector mounted twenty-six guns—upon her first cruise, engaged the *Admiral Duff* of thirty-six guns—compelled her to strike her flag—and was prevented from conducting her triumphantly into an American port, by the explosion of the prize, immediately after her capture.

The humane crew of the Protector picked up about forty of the Admiral Duff's crew, and every other soul on board perished. Thus early did our naval heroes shew that genuine humanity is ever blended with true courage.

He next entered the sloop of war *Winthrop* as first Lieutenant, under Capt. Little. Finding a British Brig of superiour force, lying in the harbour of Penobscot, Lieut. Preble conceived the daring project of taking her by surprise. Capt. Little concluded to make the hazardous attempt. Preble was placed at the head of forty seaman ; and all were clad in white frocks. Upon the night in which the design was to be executed or defeated, as the fortune of naval warfare should determine, Capt. Little run the Winthrop along side the armed Brig, which lay near a considerable battery of cannon on shore. He was hailed by the enemy most vociferously, who exclaimed—" *You will run aboard*" Lieut. Preble, cooly answered—" *Aye aye Sir, we are* COMING *aboard*"—and instantly jumped into the brig, followed by only fourteen men, as the rest could not gain her by the violent motion of the vessel. While the Lieutenant was preparing for a desperate contest, the anxious Capt. Little hailed him, and asked him—" *Will you not have more men ?*"—The gallant Lieutenant, finding but little time to answer interrogatories particularly, exclaimed with a stentorian voice, " *No, Sir, we have more than we want ; we stand in each others' way.*" The *white frocks* of the Americans, enabled them to distinguish each other, even in darkness. That part of the crew who had gained the deck jumped overboard, and swam ashore, which was within pistol shot.

Many below followed their example and leaped out of the cabin window. The Lieutenant, deliberately entered the cabin, where he found the officers either in bed or dressing. He sternly demanded a surrender of the brig, assuring them that resistance was vain; and might, to them, prove disastrous. The astonished British officers could in vain call their men to quarters, for they had made a passage through the waves to the shore. They surrendered as gracefully as they could; and as Preble was conducting his prize out of port, the batteries opened upon it, and the infantry poured a harmless shower of musketry. This was amongst the most gallant deeds of the naval force in the Revolutionary war; and placed Preble upon an eminence, upon which he ever stood to the day of his death.

As the prototype of the gallant Decatur, he was by no means satisfied with *one* noble achievement as the foundation of his fame. He continued in the sloop of war Winthrop, in the assiduous discharge of duty, until the British crown acknowledged the independence of the American Republic.

Then literally *ended* the small *beginning* of the American Navy. But the scintillations of naval glory were not extinguished—they were only smothered—they were to be revived again into a blaze by the cheering breezes of national prosperity.

It is not known to the writer that Lieut. Preble took any part in the naval warfare with France in the administration of Adams. The conclusion may fairly be made, that he did not; as he certainly would have been "heard from" if he had. But this is *all* conjecture.

In 1801, he was appointed to the command of the well-known frigate Essex, as Post-Captain, and proceeded to the East Indies to afford protection and convoy to the American trade in those seas. Not long after his return, he was designated by government to take command of that squadron in which he, Capt. Decatur, and the brilliant list of American ocean-warriours associated with them, were to give weight and character to American naval prowess, amongst distant nations, who before knew Americans only as a nation of merchants, and upon whose commerce and citizens some of them had preyed with impunity.

In tracing the life of Capt. Decatur from the time Comm. Preble took the command of the American squadron in the Mediterranean, until he retired from it, the writer was under the unavoidable necessity of blending with it that of the Commodore. It need not be here repeated.

At the time he left the Mediterranean, it had become the theatre of his fame. His glory was familiar to the *Pope at Rome ;* and although his squadron belonged to a distant and *Protestant* nation, he declared that " *All Christendom had not effected in centuries, what the American squadron had accomplished in the space of a single year.*" The name of Preble, as commander in chief, and of Decatur his leading champion, resounded through all the maritime nations upon the shores of the Mediterranean. Not only Tripoli, but all the Barbary powers bordeing upon that sea, were held in check, and their indiscriminate depredation upon all the commercial world trading in its ports, enjoyed in a greater or less degree, the benefits arising from the presence, the

vigilance, and the achievements of the American squadron. Even the jealousy of British naval officers, for a time, gave place to the effusions of involuntary admiration.

But it was in the bosom of his own beloved country where the veteran Commodore received demonstrations of respect and approbation most grateful to his patriotic and noble heart. Particulars must be omitted. The American government, fully acquainted with his nautical skill, and duly appreciating his invaluable services, employed him to assist in arranging, systematising, and advancing the naval establishment of the Republic. He had conquered Tripoli into a peace, which was concluded in a few months after he returned to America. A vote of thanks, and a medal, were presented to him by Congress.

He died in his native town, upon the 25th August, 1807. He has a monument of his fame in the heart of every officer and seaman who ever served under him. It is enough to say that STEPHEN DECATUR, never ceased to express his unqualified admiration of the immortal PREBLE, until he was rendered immortal himself, and followed his beloved and adored naval patron into eternity.

# CHAPTER XI.

Capt. Decatur takes command of the frigate CONSTITUTION—Perfection of discipline in the American Navy—He takes command of the frigate CONGRESS.—Peace with Tripoli—Emancipation of Capt. *Bainbridge*, his officers and seamen—Meeting between them and Capt. Decatur, American officers and seamen of the Squadron—*Captain* Decatur returns to America in the frigate Congress—Visits his father, *Commodore* Decatur, at Philadelphia—He is appointed Superintendant of Gun-boats—Marries Miss Wheeler, of Norfolk, (Vir.)—Supersedes Comm. Barron, and takes command of the frigate Chesapeake—" Affair of the Chesapeake"—*Captain* Decatur takes command of the Southern Squadron as COMMODORE.

CAPT. DECATUR, upon the retirement of Comm. Preble, from the American squadron, in the Mediterranean, found himself senior to all the officers of the *original* squadron, and, next in command to Comm. Barron who united the *additional* force with it, and assumed the chief command of the whole.

As commander of the noble frigate Constitution, and of the gallant officers and seamen who had so long served under the immediate orders of Comm. Preble, Decatur felt as if a high degree of responsibility devolved upon him. It was the first frigate he ever commanded, and he was the youngest officer in the American navy ever placed in so important a station. But although he had arrived only to that period of life when the characters of men generally *begin* to develope their *permanent* qualities, he had so intently and assiduously

pursued the duties of his profession--had passed through so many grades of office—had seen such a diversity of service, and had fought so many battles, that he had become qualified for any station in the navy.

As the very respectable force brought into the Mediterranean by Comm. Barron so essentially augmented the American squadron, the most efficient operations were probably expected to be immediately commenced. But the Bashaw was already sufficiently humbled. Negociations were opened upon shore, and the *united* squadrons had little more to perform than the sluggish and irksome duty of standing off and on, and awaiting the result of the deliberations at the Bashaw's palace.

Capt. Decatur, after such a long series of incessant duty, might well be supposed to need repose. But, ever ready to receive and execute the orders of his new commander, he remitted no portion of his accustomed vigilance in preparing for it. While in command of the Constitution, he enjoyed the society of the accomplished officers who remained in her, and who had participated so largely in the dangers the squadron *had* encountered, and the victories it *had* gained.

No event of sufficient interest to relate particularly, took place in relation to Capt. Decatur while on board the Constitution. It might be hazardous to say that the crew made great advances in the science of naval tactics while under his command, as they had so long served under the accomplished Preble ; but it has ever been acknowledged that Capt. Decatur was amongst the most strict and best qualified *disciplinarians* in the American Navy. This, if not the very first, is next to the first quality of a naval officer. Discipline has been

acquired by all the American officers, and to a degree of perfection unknown even to the oldest veteran Admirals of Britain, who *now* enjoy the *benefits* of centuries of *previous* naval experience, whereas scarce a quarter of a century has passed since the American Navy has had existence.

In rapturously contemplating the splendid achievements of Decatur, the reader is exceedingly prone to overlook the causes which have produced such wonderful effects. Even *his* unequalled personal courage in action, might have led him to the fate which almost invariably befals misdirected rashness, had he not thoroughly acquired that *nautical skill* which enabled him to practise those masterly manœuverings, which so often baffled his most skilful adversaries. And also that *military skill*, which has given such complete perfection to American gunnery, and produced such rapid and tremendous effects upon the enemy.

It is believed that this system may be called THE AMERICAN NAVAL SYSTEM—and that it is retained as an *arcanum* with our naval officers. After the most diligent research, no *publication* could be found which developed, what, to a landsman, seems as a mystery. This unquestionably is the dictate of the soundest policy. Superior skill to the enemy, gives an advantage next to that of superior courage; and although Americans cannot pronounce all their enemies *inferior* in the last, it is perfectly honourable to conquer them by superiority in the first; and to maintain that superiority by concealing the causes of it from them.* Gen. Washington,

* After a few naval victories in the war of 1812, a distinguish-

when indecorously interrogated, asked the inquisitive meddler—"*Can you keep a secret, Sir?*"—"*Certainly, I can.*"—"*So can I, Sir,*" the profound General replied. The student of *military tactics* can find treatise piled upon treatise, from the pens of subalterns up to Major-Generals, and from the humble pamphlet to the ponderous octavo. Still it may be asked, have our officers in the army surpassed, or have they equalled those of the navy in an *uniform* system of discipline?

After the lapse of some time, Capt. Decatur was removed from the Constitution to the frigate *Congress*, a ship of inferior rate. Ever respectful to his commander in chief, and ever cheerful in the discharge of any duty assigned him, he pursued the same undeviating course of discipline on board the Congress, as he ever had done from the days of his earliest promotion. Wherever he commanded, he possessed the rare faculty of infusing amongst the crew the spirit that pervaded his own bosom. Under him, rigid discipline became a pleasing pastime and duty a pleasure.

ed British writer, on the capture of the *Boxer*, thus expresses himself: "The fact seems to be but too clearly established, that the Americans have *some superior mode of firing*; and we cannot be too anxiously employed in discovering to what circumstances that superiority is owing."—Another British writer after lamenting in the bitterness of grief, the loss of the *Macedonian*, says: "It affords an additional ground to reflect and to enquire seriously into the strange causes which have rendered our *relative circumstances with respect to this new enemy*, so different from what they *have had hitherto to contend with.*" It is trusted they never will learn the *Theory* of American naval tactics—and the *Practice* of them they will not be disposed very soon to try again.—— A writer of a system of cookery, directing how to *dress a dolphin*, gravely says---"In the first place, *catch a dolphin.*"

Negociations in the mean time were lingering and progressing, delaying and advancing in Tripoli. The severe animadversions in the American Journals at that day upon this subject, belong not to this volume. Whether the government ought to have supported and ratified the *unofficial* treaty made by Gen. Eaton, with the Ex-Bashaw, and to have restored the latter to his throne; or to have rejected that made by Mr. Lear, an *accredited agent* of the government, are questions not here to be discussed. STEPHEN DECATUR, who had so nobly and courageously aided in driving the reigning Bashaw to negociate at all, had no hand nor voice in this diplomatic arrangement.

Suffice it to say, that the sum of *sixty thousand dollars* was paid to the Bashaw—*thirty thousand* dollars less than the gallant Preble, in the midst of victory, had offered; and *five hundred and forty thousand* dollars less than the insolent Bashaw, in fancied security, had demanded. The politician who is governed solely by money logic, would certainly be satisfied with this stipulation, especially as it was a sum insufficient to support the whole squadron for sixty days. But the dignified and patriotic statesman, who "surveys the whole ground"—who knows that peace was established after a long, hazardous, and, perhaps, (*if continued*) a doubtful contest—that ample provision was made for the freedom and security of the American trade—and that, the noble and gallant Bainbridge, his gallant officers and seamen, and other American citizens, to the number of near half a thousand, who had been incarcerated in dungeons for some years, and none little less than eighteen months, were immediately discharged without the

least ransom, would unhesitatingly give his assent to this treaty.

Amongst all the consequences flowing from the peace with Tripoli, no one was so perfectly well calculated to swell with exulation such a heart as Decatur's, as the restoration of the prisoners; especially the crew of the Philadelphia. It was their bondage which had for months stimulated him to the performance of deeds which stand unrivalled upon the records of chivalrous courage. It was to him, next to a propitious Providence, that they owed their emancipation from a bondage, which as it is unknown to Christian countries, can be but feebly portrayed in Christian language. Imagine the noble *Bainbridge*, the gallant *Porter*, *Jones*, and *Biddle*, hurling indignantly the cords that had long bound them, at their humbled oppressors, and throwing themselves into the arms of the enraptured *Decatur*, *Hull*, *Lawrence*, *Morris*, *Macdonnough*, &c. &c. emphatically their "DELIVERERS"—Conceive also the numerous crew, once more in freedom, manifesting by every token of gratitude, their admiration for the champions of their liberty, and anxious once more to follow them or any other commanders, in avenging the injuries, and advancing the glory of their beloved country. Upon such an occasion as this, they might well give those tears to exulting joy, which had long been restrained by indignant grief.

Capt. Decatur, upon the conclusion of peace with Tripoli, took his departure, in the frigate Congress, from the Mediterranean, in which he had served nearly four years, under Commodores Dale, Morris, and Preble. His fame had become *familiar* with the Pope

and Cardinals of Rome—with Italians, Neapolitans, Sicilians, and Sardinians, even before it was generally *known* in his own country. But still the glory of his achievements were in a degree understood before he reached the shores of the American Republic.

The honours already conferred upon him by promotion over the heads of his *seniors*, by their voluntary consent—a vote of thanks for his skill, valour, and success, and the presentation of a sword as the insignia of his gallantry,* were fully enough to satisfy a hero of such consummate modesty as Decatur. But the spontaneous effusions of admiration,

"Bursting uncall'd from ev'ry gen'rous heart,"

could not but be grateful and exhilirating to feelings like his.

Upon his arrival at Philadelphia, he immediately repaired to the country residence of his veteran and venerable father in the vicinity of that city. The interview between such a father and such a son, must have been one of the most interesting that can be conceived by the most fertile and glowing imagination. It must have been conducted by "*Thoughts that breathe and words that burn.*" The father had lived to behold one son but just advanced into the years of manhood, loaded with honours which would have graced an aged veteran. He had lived (such is the fate of battles and the decrees of heaven) to weep the fall of another

* Vide Chap. VIII. It is believed this vote of thanks, and the present of a sword to Decatur, was the *first* bestowed upon any officer in the navy since the conclusion of the naval warfare with France.

son, treacherously slain. But this tribute which nature paid to paternal affection, was mingled with the exalted consolation, that JAMES DECATUR fell in the arms of victory, unstained by a single act that could tarnish his escutcheon. He had also discovered in his son, now before him, a display of fraternal attachment, which led him, at the imminent hazard of his life, to avenge the death of *his* son, and *his* brother.*

After the return of the Mediterranean squadron to America in 1805, the naval establishment was materially reduced. Many of the ships were laid up in ordinary—many of the officers retired upon half pay—some entered into the merchant service, as did the seamen generally.

But so fully convinced was the government of the qualifications of Capt. Decatur to conduct the affairs of the navy in the peace establishment, that he was very soon ordered to superintend the Gun-Boats, which had increased to a very considerable amount at home, while our squadron was absent in the Mediterranean.

As to the efficacy and utility of Gun Boats for attack or defence in inner harbours, and at the mouths of the numerous navigable streams in our vastly extensive, and rapidly extending Republic, the question will not be here discussed. It has however been discussed, and has been settled by naval characters. The reader has seen what was effected by only six Neapolitan Gun-Boats, of inferior construction to those of our own in Tripoli; and those acquainted with the history of the *second* war between America and Britain, know what

* See Chap. IX.

they effected, where opportunity offered, during that war.

It was left for Capt. Decatur to introduce into the Gun-Boats a system properly adapted to that species of naval armament. To this he devoted himself with that assiduity which was in him a peculiar characteristic.

To a superficial reasoner, the duty now assigned to Decatur would seem to be a degradation. For a commander of Frigates to superintend Gun-Boats, would seem to them, like an eagle which had soared amongst the clouds, humbling himself, by perching upon a shrub. Superficial indeed, is such reasoning. The man of innate greatness, is never too exalted, to devote attention to things that are small, and never so small, but that he can readily comprehend things that are great. Decatur in a *Gun-Boat*, was like Decatur in a *Line-of Battle Ship.—He* could not become small by being in a small place.

His duty was now of such a nature, as to afford him frequent opportunities to enjoy the accomplished and refined society of the larger towns upon the sea board. From the age of nineteen, to this period of his life, he had been almost constantly upon the waves. Excepting upon the occasional and very short periods he was in American ports, he had been, by his profession, completely excluded from all society excepting that which he found in his own ships. More congenial spirits, to be sure, could not be associated, than those who were there bound together by the "*three fold cord*" of common toils, common dangers, and common victories. Such a ligament could not be "*easily broken*;" nor was

it broken by Decatur, when he entered into the fashionable circles of Norfolk in Virginia.

It was no ordinary transition for an ocean-warriour, like Decatur, to leave the thundering theatre of Mars, and make his *debut* amidst the fascinating blandishments in the courts of Venus—where instead of parrying the thrust of Turkish spears and scimitars, he had only to ward off the harmless shafts of Cupid. His ears, which had long been stunned with broadsides and batteries of cannon, were now soothed "*with the soft lulling of the lute.*" He could not however descend to the level of the more effeminate courtier; and, "*albeit, unused to the melting mood*" he could not "*pen doleful ballads to his mistress' eyebrow.*"

Capt. Decatur, although he had the polish of the dignified gentleman, never divested himself of the engaging and frank simplicity of the seaman. His noble yet tender heart, had lost none of its finer feelings by the scenes of blood, carnage and death, through which duty and courage had called him to pass. To the most accomplished, elevated and dignified females of our Republic, such a character must be an object of real admiration. To their high honour they have most unhesitatingly bestowed their hands, their hearts and their fortunes upon such manly heroes. The surviving officers of our Navy and Army, after discharging their arduous duties upon the ocean and in the field, may return to their domestic circles and find a rich reward for their toils in the endearing attachment and *intelligent* society of their bosom companions.

In monarchies, the marriages in *royal* and *noble* families are most generally mere "*matters of state,*" or "*bar-*

*gain and sale.*" A prince and princess join in marriage, more to unite two crowns than two hearts. A duke, marquis, and count, marry, the one a duchess, the other a marchioness, and the last a countess, to combine extensive domains together, and often find themselves disjoined forever. They roll along in miserable splendour through life, tormented and tormenting to the grave.

In our young and rising Republic, especially amongst its gallant and heroic sons, and its exalted and refined daughters, no marriage articles, except the single one of a mutual exchange of hearts, are necessary. To speak of the marriage of the generous and heroic Capt. DECATUR, to the justly celebrated, and accomplished Miss WHEELER of Norfolk in Virginia, is a subject too delicate for the untutored pen and the unpractised heart of the writer. Without resorting to the inflated language of romance, it may simply be said, that this union was the consummation of mutual bliss, and the source of uninterrupted felicity to the husband and to the wife, until it was dissolved by the premature stroke of death.

Capt. Decatur continued in the superintendance of the Gun-boats, for a considerable period, and the effect of the system introduced amongst them was visible to every naval eye. But he was shortly to be removed from this service to another, if not of greater importance, certainly of greater responsibility.

The unfortunate occurrence, in the unfortunate frigate Chesapeake, although perhaps familiar with most readers, must be briefly alluded to, as it was connected with some of the most interesting events of Capt. Decatur's life; and in alluding to it, the writer most sen-

sibly feels the delicacy of the subject. From this portion of these memoirs, he must necessarily glance forward to the conclusion; and whenever the names of Decatur and Barron are mentioned in relation to each other, it will be done with the most scrupulous regard to truth; and if errors intervene, they shall not be intentional. It is not the business of the biographer to obtrude his *opinions* upon the reader; but to furnish a faithful detail of facts and occurrences from which he can form one for himself.

Toward the close of the year 1806, the British sailors on board a prize, ordered for Halifax, rose upon the prize officer, conducted her to an American port, and deserted from the service of their country. Some time afterwards, four men from a British cruiser (the Halifax) lying off Norfolk, Vir. made their escape, arrived at Norfolk, and immediately enlisted under Lieut. Sinclair, and were entered on board the Chesapeake, for which ship the Lieutenant was recruiting. The commander of the cruiser pursued the men—identified them, and demanded them of Lieut. Sinclair, who as a junior officer, referred him to Capt. Decatur.

Whatever might have been the decision of the Captain, if he had had power to decide the question, he too well understood his duty to arrogate to himself an authority which he did not possess. Lieut. Sinclair was serving under the commander of the Chesapeake, and to him was he accountable for his conduct. Capt. Decatur would not interfere. The men were not surrendered. At about the same time, four British seamen deserted from the Melampus, a British vessel, and were entered on board the Chesapeake. Mr. Erskine,

the then British Minister in America, applied to the government to surrender these British subjects, as they were declared to be; but the government did not interfere. Admiral Berkley, then upon the American station, ordered Capt. Humphreys, of the Leopard, to take these men *by force*, if not *surrendered* upon being claimed.

Thus in brief stood affairs, with the Chesapeake frigate, when in the month of June, 1807, Comm. Barron put to sea in her as her commander. Capt. Humphreys fell in with the Chesapeake at sea; and after hailing her, sent an officer on board with a letter to Comm. Barron, containing Admiral Berkley's orders; assuring the Commodore that his duty compelled him to execute them. Comm. Barron returned for answer, that there were no deserters on board the Chesapeake. Capt. Humphreys laid the Leopard close a-long side the Chesapeake—hailed her again, and receiving no satisfactory answer, the Leopard poured into her a full broadside. The Chesapeake struck her colours without firing a gun. Two British Lieutenants and a number of Midshipmen immediately went on board the Chesapeake—took three deserters belonging to the Melampus, one to the Halifax, and some American seamen; and then returned to the Leopard with them. The inquisitive reader can gratify a more minute curiosity than can here be satisfied, by perusing the trial of Comm. James Barron, which followed after this disastrous event.

Capt. Decatur was ordered to supersede Comm. Barron in the command of the Chesapeake—a most painful duty; as he had served *under* Comm. Barron in the Mediterranean, after he superseded Comm. Preble

in the command of the American squadron in that sea. But it was not for Capt. Decatur to decline the command of this ill-fated ship, in 1807, any more than it was for his favourite friend, Capt. Lawrence, in 1813, who fell gloriously in defending her. *His* language was —"Don't give up the ship."

The "Affair of the Chesapeake" just briefly mentioned, produced a ferment through the whole Republic. From New-Orleans to Canada—from the Atlantic to the waters of the Mississippi, there seemed to be but one exclamation—"*My voice is still for war.*" The recent achievements of our gallant little Navy in the Mediterranean, under Preble, Decatur, &c. had rendered every keel that belonged to her, dear to Americans. They considered the Chesapeake as *disgraced*, and the fame of the whole Navy, in some measure *tarnished*, by this outrageous violation of our national dignity and rights upon the ocean. It was in vain for the British minister, as the representative of the British crown, to disavow the act, unless it was accompanied with ample reparation and atonement, for the injury and the disgrace.

COMMODORE* DECATUR, in the frigate Chesapeake,

* As this is the first time the *appellation* of *Commodore* has been attached to the name of Decatur in this work, some readers may be led to suppose, that *Commodore* is a *title* in the navy, higher than that of *Captain*. The rank of *Captain* is the highest yet established in the American Navy. A *Commodore* is the senior officer in a *squadron*, and as circumstances might happen, may be a *Master-Commandant*, a *Lieutenant*, or a *Midshipman*. Even Comm. Perry and Comm. Macdonough, had not been promoted to *Captains*, when one conquered at Erie, and

was ordered to take the command of the *Southern Squadron*. It was impossible for him to foresee what would be the result of the late unwarrantable and outrageous attack upon the frigate he now commanded. He knew, however, that a *national ship*, when traversing the ocean, was as sacred as *national territory*; and that to attack it, in a hostile manner, would justify the most vigorous defence. *He* would never strike that flag under which he had so long sailed, and under which he had so often conquered, unless it were to an overwhelming superiority of force.

From the period Comm. Decatur entered into the command of the Southern Squadron in the Chesapeake frigate, until he was called upon for the discharge of more important duties, he devoted himself with unwearied vigilance to the interest of that portion of the yet small American Navy that was in commission.

Were the writer disposed to swell this biographical memoir to three ponderous octavos, as Boswell has the Life of Johnson, he might detail the numerous minor incidents of Comm. Decatur's peculiarly interesting life, in the pleasing and interesting scenes of peace. In those charming scenes, he imparted high animation, and innocent hilarity to every circle he honoured by his presence. Although the gentleman *officer* upon the quarter-deck, he was "*all the gentleman*" in the parlour. He was easy, frank, and accessible as a companion, and resorted to every familiarity not inconsistent with personal dignity, to banish that reserve which

the other at Champlain. When *afterwards* promoted, Perry's commission was *dated* 10th Sept. 1813, and Macdonough's 11th Sept. 1814.---the days of their victories.

a consciousness of his superiority inspired in his associates. In those placid scenes, he seemed to wish for every one who surrounded him, to forget what he *had been*, and to regard him only for what he *there was.*

But the subject paramount to all other considerations in the mind of Comm. Decatur, was, that of the American Navy. Of that he never lost sight ; and he considered every other enjoyment, amusement and pleasure, as secondary to those he partook in, when advancing its prowess, and seeing its glory augmented.

It was not his business to " settle the affairs of the Republic,"* which at this period of his life began to assume a lowering aspect; and he knew too well the duty of a naval commander, to interfere in them. He only waited for the orders of his government, and held himself in constant readiness to execute them.

The Berlin and Milan decrees of the Emperor of France, and the Orders in Council of the court of St. James, produced a tremendous effect upon the vastly extended commerce of America. They amounted almost to a war of extermination against American commerce, and the wreck of it which remained, was sunk by the embargo laid by Congress upon American vessels. The " *restrictive system*" was justified by its advocates upon the principle of *Lex Talionis*, or the law of retaliation. What effect it produced upon the commerce of the Republic, or what coercion upon its enemies, has been demonstrated by its operation. From 1807 to 1812, America could hardly be said to be at peace or at war with the great belligerent powers of

* Vide Chap. XIII.

Europe. Good cause for open hostilities it had against more than one of them; but the pacific policy of our rulers chose to exhaust the last efforts of *Negociation*, before they resorted to the last evil, a *War*.

But the causes for war between America and Britain, were constantly accumulating; and, like the latent fires of Ætna and Vesuvius, increased in malignity the longer they were suppressed. Britain at this period was not only the greatest, but almost the only naval power in Europe. Nelson had not only conquered, but he had nearly annihilated the fleets of France, Spain, and Denmark; and the only reason why that of the powerful Autocrat of Russia did not suffer the same fate, was, because his wary policy dictated to him not to expose it to certain destruction.

Although distant nations scarcely ranked America with naval powers, yet the proud and jealous Ministers of George III. full well knew what the infant Navy of the Republic had accomplished in the Atlantic, at the close of the eighteenth, and in the Mediterranean, at the commencement of the nineteenth century. The names of Truxton, Preble and Decatur, reminded them of their own Duncan, Jervis and Nelson. Although the British government could not obliterate the fame of these American naval heroes, they wished to annihilate the little Navy in which they had acquired it. Hence the rude and outrageous attack upon the frigate Chesapeake, which Decatur now commanded, but which he did not command when she *surrendered*. Although the British government *diplomatically* disavowed the act, and tendered satisfaction and atonement, yet it secretly rejoiced that she became such an easy

victim. Her naval commanders imagined that her fate was the forerunner of that of every deck that carried American guns.

Next to the American Navy, amongst the causes of British jealousy, was the almost boundless extent of American commerce. Americans for some years had been the *carriers* of almost all the belligerent powers in Europe ; and although Britain herself participated in the benefit of this " carrying trade," she could not endure that the Republic should rapidly grow rich and powerful by means of it.

Comm. Decatur, while in the Chesapeake frigate as commander of the Southern squadron, had the double duty of watching British armed ships constantly hovering upon the American coast, and enforcing the acts of the government regarding American vessels.

# CHAPTER XII.

*Commodore* Decatur takes command of the Frigate United States—Interview with Capt. *John Surnam Carden, in time of peace*—British Naval Officers on American station *before the commencement of War*—Declaration of War against G. Britain—Immense disparity of naval force between America and Britain—Comm. Decatur puts to sea from New York, June 21st 1812—Makes an extensive cruise and enters the port of Boston—Sails from thence 8th October—Upon the 25th captures the frigate MACEDONIAN—His official account of the action—Length of, and incidents in the action—Meeting of Comm. Decatur and Capt. Carden—Dreadful slaughter in the Macedonian—Arrival of frigate United States and that ship at New London—Reception of Flag at Washington—Arrival at New York—Reception there—Comm. Decatur's humanity.

Comm. Decatur, in 1810, was ordered to take command of the frigate United States, which was again fitted for sea, and put in commission. Exhilarating indeed must have been the reflection, that he was now sole commander of the noble Frigate in which he commenced his naval career in the humble capacity of Midshipman. A retrospective view of the scenes through which he had passed—the variety of vessels in which he had served and conquered—the numerous commanders whom he had assiduously obeyed and supported, were calculated to produce in his mind the most complacent delight.—At the same time, a glance into futurity excited his deepest solicitude. It was in his very nature to "press forward to the mark of the prize of his high

calling." The glory he *had* acquired, and the high standing he held in the records of fame, instead of producing supineness, rather excited his vigilance. He knew that the character he had acquired, must still be supported ; and although he could scarcely hope to surpass the deeds he had already achieved, he was determined not to tarnish the brilliancy of them, by the rust of *inaction.* While the great Achilles was supinely reposing in his tent, the blustering Ajax was exciting the admiration of Agamemnon, and even the anxiety of Hector.

Comm. Decatur, "through the mind's eye," saw the storm which was gathering, and even lowering over his beloved country. Perfectly well acquainted with the power and the disposition of the enemy the Republic was to encounter, he looked forward to the contest as to a dreadful struggle in which equals were to engage Having one common origin, but no longer any common interest, he knew that when Americans and Englishmen, the descendants of *Saxons*, met each other in hostile array, it would be an encounter, fierce in the extreme, and would remind the classical reader of ancient battles—

"When Greek meets Greek, then comes the tug of war."

So confident were the statesmen, who guided the destinies of America, that the just and equitable terms on which she would negociate, would eventuate in peace, that they were less vigilant in preparing for war than they would have been under a different state of things. The *military spirit* of Americans *upon land*, was almost lost in the luxuries which sudden wealth

occasions ; and the declaration of the facetious Knight in regard to *his* soldiers, might with some propriety be applied to *ours*.—"They were the cankers of a dull world and a long peace"—and although they might afford "food for powder and fill a pit" they were little calculated *at once*, to meet the veterans who had recently conquered Portuguese, Spaniards and Frenchmen ; hence the disasters of the army, in the campaigns of 1812 and 13, which awakened that martial fire that went on "conquering and to conquer" in 1814.

The reverse of this picture may well apply to the gallant little American Navy. Although from 1805 to the commencement of the second war between the Republic and Britain, but a small portion of it was in commission, or in service, the whole of it was, *at all times*, in prime order. The vigilance of the Navy Department, although it could not extend, it nevertheless preserved, our few ships, and kept them in constant readiness for any emergency. What was still more important, Comm. Decatur, and the rest of the Post-Captains who were retained in service, *would not permit the Naval spirit to slumber*.

Bainbridge, Rodgers, Porter, Hull, Stewart, Jones, Lawrence, Biddle, Morris, Macdonnough, Perry, Chauncey, and many other gallant and accomplished officers, were in the bosom of the country, ready at a moment's warning to enter again into its naval service.

The seamen too, who had served under them, were ready and anxious to fly instantly to their standards when called.

Comm. Decatur, after he took the command of the frigate United States, visited most of the naval ports.

His ship was the rallying point of the Navy, and his presence infused animation into the bosom of every officer and seaman who enjoyed his society. With acute penetration he discovered every error, in every species of naval armament, and with matchless skill, and "modest assurance," applied the corrective.

Those kind of courtesies and civilities which generally are interchanged between *civil* naval officers, belonging to different nations at peace with each other, took place between Comm. Decatur aud the British naval officers upon the American station. One of the interviews which passed, is too engaging to be omitted. Capt. *John S. Carden*, afterwards the gallant and brave commander of the frigate Macedonian, happened to enjoy one of those interesting interviews with Comm. Decatur. "Commodore," said the Captain, "we now meet as friends, and God grant we may never meet as enemies; but we are subject to the orders of our governments, and must obey them."—"I heartily reciprocate the sentiment," said the ingenuous Decatur. "But," said Carden, (with that refined and elegant irony which one *gentleman* can practise upon another without offence) "suppose, in the course of events, we *should* meet as enemies, what, Sir, do you imagine would be the consequences to yourself, and to the force you should command." "Why, Sir," said the hero of the Mediterranean (giving full credit to the gallantry of Carden, without forgetting what was due to his own character) "if we should meet with forces which might fairly be called equal, the conflict would undoubtedly be a severe one; but the flag of my country should never leave the staff from which it waved, as long as

there was a hull to support it." With what exquisite delight must these dauntless warriours have contemplated each others characters, after the frank expression of such exalted sentiments ? Over a vast expanse of ocean from the place of *this* interview, these men of inflexible honour, and unparalleled heroism, again met upon the deck of the frigate United States : but this belongs to a future part of these Sketches.

Had all the British ships, which for years previous to the commencement of hostilities, were hovering upon the American coast, had such commanders as Capt. Carden, the frigate *Chesapeake* would never have been disgraced by Humphreys of the *Leopard;* and Bingham of the *Little Belt* would not have owed his existence to the sparing mercy of Comm. Rodgers of the frigate *President.* Many of these little great British officers, who owed their greatness to the reflections of a beam from the lustre of Nelson's glory—

"Dress'd up in a little brief authority—
"*Most confident* of what they were *least assured*
"Play'd most fantastic tricks before high heaven"—

and although, to pursue the quotation, they might not have " made the angels weep" they excited the indignation of their own more dignified countrymen, and the sovereign contempt of such men as Rodgers and Decatur, who well understood their characters. While Americans are ever prompt to pay due respect to the merits of Hotham, Hardy, and Carden, even though enemies, they feel an ineffable disgust at such beings as Humphreys and Bingham—Cockburn, Beresford, and

Stackpole. Lest this language should be deemed acrimonious and unauthorised, I would just remind the reader *again*, that Humphreys attacked the frigate Chesapeake, and Bingham the frigate President, *in time of peace*—that Cockburn violated every principle of civilized warfare on the borders of Chesapeake bay, and applied the torch to the Capitol, President's house and national library at Washington—that Beresford stripped the gallant Jones and his crew almost naked, when his 74 took the little Wasp of 18 guns—and that the blustering Stackpole, in the Statira, of 44 declined, on fair and equal grounds, to fight Capt. Jones when he commanded the Macedonian, *in time of war*. It ought to be the motto of every impartial historian and biographer : "*Judex damnatur, cum nocens absolvitur.*"

Passing over numerous interesting incidents in the life of Comm. Decatur, of minor importance however, we now approach to that period when the constituted authorities of the American Republic, having resorted to every measure consistent with the national dignity to avoid an "appeal to arms;" and publishing to the world a *manifesto*, detailing the causes for the important measure ; declared that war existed between the United States of America and the United Kingdom of Great Britain. It was not for the officers and seamen of the Navy, nor the officers and soldiers of the Army to discuss the question, whether this declaration was founded in justice, necessity, or expediency ; and although the ardent political partizan, in the fervour of misguided zeal, might declare it to be *unjust unnecessary, wicked*, and *unnatural*, it was the business of the

Navy to sustain the national rights and honor upon the ocean, and of the Army to protect and defend our territory against every hostile invader. The 19th of June, 1812 forms an era in our history little less important than the 4th of July 1776. It called upon the patriotic sons of the Republic to maintain that independence which was proclaimed by that venerable body of gigantic statesmen, the "Old Congress," and which was established by the best blood that ever flowed in man.

The effect this declaration had upon Comm. Decatur, and the matchless band of his brother officers and seamen, was suddenly developed. In every naval port, and upon every deck that mounted a gun, were heard the rapid "notes of dreadful preparation."

Never, since the discovery of the magnetic needle had covered oceans with merchantmen of almost boundless wealth, and armed ships of often resistless power, was a contest entered into between rival nations upon the watery element with such an immense disparity of force. The list of the naval force of Britain, from 1812, when war commenced, to 1815, when it ended, numbered from *seven hundred and fifty* to *one thousand* sail—from first rates of 120 guns to Schooners. There was not a ship belonging to any power in Asia, Africa or Europe that presumed to raise a hostile flag against them. To *annihilate* the handful of American ships, it was concluded by British officers it was only necessary to *find* them.

Let the *table* be reversed, and the American naval force in 1812 will appear to that of Britain, like a wart to a mountain. "*Look upon this picture and upon that.*"

The *whole* force which Comm. Decatur and his associates had *at command* was :—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| United States | Rate | Oneida | |
| Constitution | 44 | Syren | 16 |
| President | | Argus | |
| Constellation | | Enterprize | |
| Congress | 36 | Rattlesnake | |
| Chesapeake | | Nautilus | 14 |
| Essex | | Vixen | |
| Adams | 32 | Viper | 12 |
| John Adams | 24 | Vixen | 8 |
| Louisiana | | | |
| Hornet | 18 | | |
| Wasp | | | |
| Brig Adams | | | |

This little catalogue of ships ought to be in the memory of every lover of American greatness ; and although the whole of them carried less weight of metal than would have "the six Seventy-Fours" *once* ordered to be built by the government, yet their achievements in the progress of the war, inflicted a wound upon the enemy which will never be healed, and shed rays of glory upon the American character which will never be obscured.

It surely must excite the astonishment as well as the admiration of the reader, that Comm. Decatur, every officer and every seaman on board the frigate United States, was in complete readiness to weigh anchor, and actually sailed from New York, 21st June, within forty-eight hours after the declaration of war was made at the seat of government, and one hour after he received the intelligence. The good wishes of every patriot heart, and the fervent prayers of every sincere Christian, in the immense throng that witnessed his departure, followed him and his ship's company, as they wafted off into the Atlantic ocean.

He now entered into a new theatre of action, and was approaching into a contest, with to *him* a new enemy. He had witnessed the conquests of the little American squadron over the naval forces of France in the warfare with that power in the administration of ADAMS. He had himself been the most prominent and distinguished leader in the brilliant and unsurpassed victories in the Mediterranean, over Tripoli, in the administration of JEFFERSON. But he was now, (in the administration of MADISON,) to enter into a contest with the ocean-warriours of Britain, who, so far from acknowledging any human beings that traversed the ocean as their equals, smiled at the idea that any should presume to oppose them.

Better understanding the nature of naval service than to suppose that, because Americans had conquered Frenchmen and Tripolitans, they could, *of course*, conquer Britons, his utmost solicitude was excited ; and, after commencing his cruise, he assiduously endeavoured to impress upon the officers and seamen of his ship, the magnitude and importance of the service upon which they had entered. In his First Lieutenant, W. H. Allen, he recognized the perfect seaman, and noticed, with admiration, the accuracy and precision with which he disciplined the crew. Instead of reposing in his cabin, and suffering that *ennui* which listlessness produces, Comm. Decatur was constantly on the alert. He did not assume that affected greatness which renders an officer indifferent to the minutia of duty ; but possessed that real greatness which led him to attend to the smallest, and readily to comprehend the greatest concerns of his ship. Although he was sailing in a

squadron under the command of Comm. Rodgers, he made *his* ship his *own province*, and felt himself exclusively responsible for *her* management.

The first cruise of the frigate United States was a very extensive one. She was off the English Channel —along the coast of France, Spain and Portugal, to within thirty miles of the rock of Lisbon. She made the island of Madeira, and laid off Cora and Floros. She cruised along the banks of Newfoundland, the coast of Nova Scotia ; indeed she traversed those portions of the Atlantic where there was the greatest probability of making an impression upon British commerce ; and, what was more urgently desired by her commander, to try her metal with an equal British force. Although a number of prizes and prisoners were taken, the frigate United States returned with the squadron, without having signalized herself any otherwise than by the daring cruise she had made, in the very face of the enemy, and by enabling an immense number of American merchantmen to return home richly laden.

But superior joys were in store for him upon his arrival. The achievements of his gallant and admired friend, Capt. Hull ; and no less gallant Lieut. Morris, who was next to his right arm in the destruction of the frigate Philadelphia, imparted a rapture to his heart, little less exhilarating than if he had achieved an equal deed himself. When he beheld the *Flag of the Gurriere* in the hands of his Mediterranean comrades, who, with him, had so often made the *Turkish Crescent* bow, the measure of his delight was full. When next he saw the *Flag of the Alert* in the possession of the gallant Porter, who was rescued from Turkish bondage by his

achievements, his happiness was farther augmented. They were cheering auguries of the additional laurels which were shortly to be added to the garland that graced his own brow.

Comm. Decatur, in the frigate United States, sailed from Boston on the 8th October, upon his second cruise. Instead of encountering the foe, his ship endured severe struggles in gales of wind; but she was destined to survive them, and to conquer the enemy.

Nothing else of note occurred, until the memorable 25TH OF OCTOBER, 1812. Upon that auspicious morning the cheering notes—"A ship of war to windward" resounded through the noble frigate. Every heart on board swelled with enthusiasm, and needed nothing to arouse them to courage. The cool and collected, yet animated manner of the Commodore; infused confidence and heroism into every bosom. The ship was instantly cleared for action—and all hands repaired to quarters.

The official account of the action which followed, is with the highest pleasure, incorporated into this volume.

*U. S. S. United States, at Sea,*
*October* 30, 1812.

The Hon. PAUL HAMILTON,

SIR—I have the honour to inform you, that on the 25th inst. being in the lat. 29 N. long 29 30 W. we fell in with, and, after an action of an hour and an half, captured his Britannic Majesty's ship Macedonian, commanded by Capt. John Carden, and mounting 49 carriage guns (the odd gun shifting.) She is a frigate of the largest class, two years old, four months out of dock, and reputed one of the best sailers in the British ser-

vice. The enemy being to windward, had the advantage of engaging us at his own distance, which was so great, that for the first half hour we did not use our carronades, and at no moment was he within the complete effect of our musketry or grape—to this circumstance and a heavy swell, which was on at the time, I ascribe the unusual length of the action.

The enthusiasm of every officer, seaman and marine on board this ship on discovering the enemy—their steady conduct in battle, and precision of their fire, could not be surpassed. Where all met my fullest expectations, it would be unjust in me to discriminate. Permit me, however, to recommend to your particular notice, my First Lieutenant, Wm. H. Allen. He has served with me upwards of five years, and to his unremitted exertions in disciplining the crew, is to be imputed the obvious superiority of our gunnery exhibited in the result of the contest.

Subjoined is a list of the killed and wounded on both sides. Our loss, compared with that of the enemy, will appear small. Amongst our wounded, you will observe the name of Lieut. Funk, who died in a few hours after the action—he was an officer of great gallantry and promise, and the service has sustained a severe loss in his death.

The Macedonian lost her Mizen-mast, fore and main top masts and main yard, and was much cut up in her hull. The damage sustained by this ship was not such as to render her return into port necessary, and had I not deemed it important that we should see our prize in, should have continued our cruise.

With the highest consideration and respect, I am, sir, your obedient humble servant.

(Signed) STEPHEN DECATUR.

*List of killed and wounded on board the United States.*

Thomas Brown, New-York, seaman; Henry Shepherd, Philadelphia, do.; Wm. Murray, Boston, a boy; Michael O'Donnel, New-York, private marine; John Roberts, do. do.—*Killed.*

John Mercer Funk, Philadelphia, Lieut.; John Archibald, New-York, carpenter's crew; Christian Clark, do. seaman; George Christopher, do. ordinary seaman; George Mahar, do. do.; Wm. James, do. do.; John Laton, do. private marine—*Wounded.*

On board the Macedonian there were thirty-six killed, and sixty-eight wounded. Among the former were the boatswain, one master's mate, and the school-master, and of the latter were the first and third lieutenants, one master's mate, and two midshipmen.

For *brevity*, *modesty*, and *perspicuity*, we may safely challenge the admirers of the official accounts of our naval victories, to produce any one that surpasses this of Comm. Decatur's. Admired they generally are, not only by the American reader, but even Englishmen, in the midst of the chagrin and mortification they feel while reading them, involuntarily express their admiration. In speaking of the capture of the Macedonian, and Decatur's official account of it, a distinguished British writer thus forcibly expresses himself:—"While we see British superiority upon the ocean thus *disputed*, and the victory of Americans thus *described*, we know

not which most to admire, the heroism of Decatur in capturing the Macedonian, or his modesty in describing the battle."

One great cause of exultation at our naval victories, has been the very short time in which they have been achieved. Comm. Decatur assigns the reason for the "*unusual length of the action*" (only 90 minutes)—"The enemy, being to windward, had the advantage of engaging us at his own distance, &c."—The language of the naval court-martial who tried Capt. Carden for losing his ship, is this—"The court is of opinion, that previous to the commencement of the action, from an *over-anxiety* to keep the weather-gage, an opportunity was lost of closing with the enemy."—It was an "opportunity lost" to *Comm. Decatur*, by the "over-anxiety" of *Capt. Carden*. "Closing with the enemy" was a lesson which the commander of the frigate United States thoroughly learned, and effectually practised in the Mediterranean during the war with Tripoli; and had he have been so fortunate as to have had the weather-gage of the Macedonian, and Nelson had been a spectator of the contest, he would have exclaimed of Decatur, as he did of his favourite Collingwood at the battle of Trafalgar—"*See in what style the noble fellow carries his ship into action.*"

Comm. Decatur had on board his frigate a little boy, whose father, a noble seaman, had died and left the little fellow and his mother in poverty. As the *Macedonian* hove in sight, and the seamen of the United States frigate were clearing ship for action, the noble lad run up to the Commodore, saying—"Captain, I wish *my* name might be put down on the roll"—"Why so my lad?"

"So that I can draw a share of the prize money, Sir," answered the young hero. His request was granted; after the Macedonian struck, the Commodore called the lad to him—"Well Bill, we have taken her, and your share of the prize, if we get her safe in, may be about $200—what will you do with it?"—"I'll send half of it to my mother, Sir, and the other half shall send me to school." Delighted with a spirit so noble, and yet so affectionate, he took the fine little fellow into his protection—obtained for him a Midshipman's warrant—attended to his education—and he now bids fair to emulate and *possibly* to equal the achievements of his noble patron.

In the hottest of the engagement, and at the moment the mizen-mast of the Macedonian went by the board, a seaman actively engaged in working his gun, exclaimed to his comrades—"Aye, aye, we have made a Brig of her." Being overheard by the Commodore, he said, "Well my boys, take good sight at your object, and she will soon be a sloop; and immediately turning to another gunner, said—"My good fellow, aim at the yellow," [a stripe in the Macedonian between wind and water] "her *rigging* is going fast enough; she must have a little more *hulling*." A favourite comrade of one of the seamen having fallen desperately wounded by his side, he exclaimed, "ah my poor fellow, I must attend to the enemy a few minutes longer—his colours must soon come down; and then I will attend to you" —"Let me live till I hear that" said the agonized hero, "and I shall want attention from nobody."

That admirable seaman, 1st Lieut. W. H. Allen, in this action, beheld the practical result of the discipline

he had introduced into this noble ship, and unrivalled crew, and which occasioned Comm. Decatur's high commendation. So rapid was the firing, and so completely was the frigate at one time enveloped in fire and smoke, that the crew of the Macedonian gave three cheers, supposing her to be on fire. Their cheers were soon converted to groans by the thickening messengers of death which poured into their ill-fated ship.

After the Macedonian struck her colours, and her commander ascended the quarter deck of the United States, a scene peculiarly affecting followed. With a dignified grace, he approached Comm. Decatur and offered him his sword. With a benign suavity, and a manner wholly unassuming, the Commodore said, "Sir, I cannot receive the sword of a man who has so bravely defended his ship, but I will receive your hand." It was the hand of Capt. *John Surnam Carden*, with whom he had the interesting interview mentioned in a preceding chapter. Upon recognizing each other, *silence* was the most impressive eloquence. The fortune of battles had placed one gallant hero in the hands of another; and they steadfastly looked at each other with those kind of feelings which would be disgraced by *any* description. The affable grace of Comm. Decatur, put the gallant Carden as much at ease as a conquered hero could be placed in the hour of defeat. He had left his ship almost a complete wreck, and could discover but little of the effects of the severe conflict in the frigate that had so effectually conquered her. The *Macedonian*, when she struck, was in a state little better than that of the *Gurriere*, *Java* and *Peacock;* the last of which sunk even before the whole crew

could be taken out, and the two others were abandoned by the captors and sunk.

But the injury done to the ship is forgotten when the slaughter made amongst the crew is considered. An officer of the frigate United States, besides communicating many other interesting particulars, thus expresses himself:—"After securing our prisoners, I was sent on board the prize to assist in fitting her out, which we did in a few days under jury-masts. I assure you the scene she exhibited just after the action, was distressing to humanity. Fragments of the dead were distributed in every direction—the decks covered with blood—one continued agonizing yell of the unhappy, wounded victims:—a scene so horrible of my fellow creatures, I assure you, deprived me very much of the pleasure of victory."

It will be recollected that the official report states the *killed* on board the Macedonian to be 36—*wounded* —68. *Fifty-three* of the wounded died afterwards of their wounds; making 89 in the whole;—more lives than were lost by the Americans in *all* their battles with the Tripolitans! And, what will astonish every reader, who has not, like the writer, critically examined every official report to ascertain the fact—this loss of human lives on board the *Macedonian*, by instant death or wounds which proved mortal, was greater than that of the Americans in *every one* of the actions between *single ships*, where *victories* were won; and also in the victory upon Lake Erie, during the war with Great Britain! Equally astonishing is it that this loss is only *six less* than that sustained by the *Essex*, of 32 guns, in the unparalleled contest with the frigate *Phœbe* of 36—

and sloop of war *Cherub*, of 28—of the *President* 44 with the *Majestic* (razee) frigates *Endymion*, *Pomone*, *Tenedos*, and brig *Despatch*—and of the *Argus* of 18 with the *Pelican* of 21 guns !—

An important duty yet remained for Comm. Decatur to perform—to conduct his ship and his shattered prize over an immense and wide spread ocean, filled, in almost every direction, with vigilant and powerful enemies, and to reach an American port. Although the uniform courtesy and hospitality of the Commodore, made Capt. Carden "forget that he was a prisoner," yet he might well hope to be recaptured; and see the frigate United States, with the Macedonian, entering a British port. But another destiny awaited the persevering Decatur. It was for him to carry into port the first British frigate ever captured by a *single* frigate; and it was for the little town of New London, in Connecticut, to be the first to welcome the returning conqueror, with the trophy of his victory.

He entered that port upon the 4th day of December, 1812, with the frigate *United States* in prime order; and the noble *Macedonian* which exhibited occular demonstration that "*she had seen service.*" Although once amongst the *newest*, and by all acknowledged the *first rate* frigate in the whole of the immense navy of Britain, she now belonged to the "Navy List" of America. The arrival of Comm. Decatur called forth every demonstrntion of joy that could be evinced by the patriotic citizens of New-London. That town and its vicinity, had always been a victim to British rapacity, ever since the British crown commenced the trade of war upon Americans. Its citizens now had before their

eyes one evidence at least, that the claws of the British Lion might be rendered harmless by the talons of the American Eagle.

But little room can be spared for notices of the numerous and flattering evidences of joy, evinced at the arrival of Comm. Decatur at New-London. The Mayor, Aldermen, and Common Council of that city, presented him their thanks. They could offer no higher proof of their admiration. A splendid ball was given in honour of the laurelled hero. He was charmed, again to witness the scenes of innocent festivity; but the fascinating tones of the violin, and the changes and promenades of graceful nymphs, were no more pleasing to him, than the shrill sound of the Boatswain's pipe, calling all hands, and the animating thrill of the bugle, summoning to the battles of his country.

Upon his arrival at New-London, he immediately dispatched one of his accomplished and brave Lieutenants, Mr. Hamilton, to Washington, with the flag of the Macedonian, and his despatches. Lieut. Hamilton arrived at the metropolis upon the evening of the 8th December. A more happy combination of circumstances cannot be imagined. It was upon the evening of a ball given in honour of the naval officers generally, and more particularly to one of the first of that gallant band, Capt. CHARLES STEWART. Not only the beauty and fashion of the city, but much of the patriotism and talents of the Republic were drawn together upon the joyous occasion. The graces were presiding over the festivities of the hall, and directing the movements of the "mazy dance." A whisper ran rapidly through the party, like a shock of electricity around

a combined circle. It was suddenly announced that *another* flag of a *British Ship of War* had been brought to the city. Every heart was palpitating with joy, and "forgot its previous raptures." The party dismissed their delightful amusements, and waited for the "full fruition of joy." It was *incipient* joy when Lieut. Hamilton entered the hall—it was joy *consummated*, when the noble Capts. Hull and Stewart triumphantly bore the flag of the *Macedonian* through the enraptured assembly, and presented it to the dignified and elevated Mrs. Madison who was present. Those who had not the happiness to witness this scene may—

> "————*Talk* of beauties that they never saw,
> And fancy raptures that they never knew."

The Secretary of the Navy, Hon. Paul Hamilton, his wife and daughter, were also present, and passed the embraces of the *father*, the *mother*, and the *sister*, with Lieut. *Hamilton*. Assembled around the festive board, one of the managers gave for the toast—

"COMMODORE DECATUR, AND THE OFFICERS AND CREW OF THE FRIGATE UNITED STATES."

The tender and impassioned language of affection and admiration, was instantly changed to the most enthusiastic plaudits. The hall reverberated with the glory of DECATUR. Memory called to view the capture of the *Ketch Intrepid*—the destruction of the *Philadelphia Frigate*—the battle with the *Tripolitan Gun-Boats*—the death of the Turk who murdered Lieut. James Decatur—and the flag of the *Macedonian* was suspended in the hall, with those of the *Gurriere* and the *Alert*.

Comm. Decatur, in the mean time, was preparing to conduct the frigates *United States* and *Macedonian* to New-York. He arrived in that port with them upon the first day of January, 1813, having been many days detained by adverse winds. He anchored the Macedonian at the Wallabout for repairs, and left the deck of the frigate *United States*, to enter once more the city from which he sailed in one hour after the declaration of war waa officially announced to him.

It would be totally inconsistent with the limits and design of this volume, to enter into particular details of all the manifestations of respect shewn to Comm. Decatur. He could not be indifferent to them; but his modesty made him shrink from the glaring display of them.

Comm. Decatur here met with two former associates when in the Mediterranean—Capts. Isaac Hull and Jacob Jones. The last he had, by his valour, emancipated from a bondage of eighteen months in a Tripolitan dungeon—he now saluted him as a champion, victorious over a superior British force. He forgot the victory of the frigate *United States* over the *Macedonian*, when contemplating that of the *Wasp* over the *Frolic*.

The corporation, and citizens of New-York, ever foremost in rewarding patriotism and valour, displayed their hospitality upon the occasion of Comm. Decatur's arrival, in a style of splendour unsurpassed. It was not a mere dinner to which he was invited—it was to a scene elucidating the highest taste, the finest arrangements, and the most noble sentiments. A capacious hall was colonaded with masts of ships, and the flags of

all the world were suspended upon them. Upon each table was a miniature ship, displaying the "star-spangled banner" of America. An area of about 20, by 10 feet, was filled with water, and a miniature of the United States frigate was floating in it. A mainsail 33, by 16 feet was suspended in the rear of the artificial lake, upon which was painted the American Eagle, holding in his beak a scroll with these words—"OUR CHILDREN ARE THE PROPERTY OF OUR COUNTRY."*—One beautiful transparency represented the American Eagle, holding in his mouth three medallions. Upon one was inscribed "HULL AND THE GURRIERE"—on another—"JONES AND THE FROLIC"—on another—"DECATUR AND THE MACEDONIAN." Another splendid transparency represented the frigate CONSTITUTION taking the GURRIERE in a blaze—August 19th 1812—The frigate UNITED STATES taking the MACEDONIAN, Oct. 25th, 1812.—The WASP, taking the FROLIC, Nov. 18th, 1812. Upon displaying these inimitable representations, the whole company expressed their feelings by nine animated cheers.

The feelings of these gallant men may be conceived but cannot be described. After they retired, amongst various other sentiments given on the occasion, was the following, which although it has rather too much of that species of humour called *punning*, is nevertheless extremely forcible, when understood.—"The three naval Architects—HULL, who at one stroke laid the *keels*

* A reference to the second chapter of this volume, will explain the appropriate meaning of this sentiment---worthy of the best Roman, in the best days of Rome.

of ten *hulls**—JONES who raised the *frames*—DECATUR, who gave the *finishing stroke*."

The corporation of the city of New-York, also gave to the whole crew of the frigate United States, a splendid dinner, in the same hall in which Comm. Decatur dined. The decorations were precisely as just described, excepting the *lake* in which the miniature frigate wafted, which was filled with *grog*, but produced not the least excess amongst these well disciplined sailors. The crew exceeded 400, and were neatly dressed in blue jackets and trowsers, scarlet vests, and glazed hats. As they marched from the frigate to the City-Hotel, reiterated applauses were given by the citizens. The splendour of the hall—the miniature lake and frigate—and above all, the transparances of the victories of the United States, Constitution, and Wasp, carried their astonishment almost to delirium. The boatswain's whistle kept them in perfect order, and "Yankee Doodle," from the inimitable band of the Macedonian, inspired them with ardent patriotism. After dinner, the boatswain thus answered Alderman Vanderbilt's elegant address.

"In behalf of my shipmates, I return our sincere thanks to the corporation of the city of New-York, for the honour which they this day have done us. Rest assured, Sir, that it will be *always* our wish, to deserve the good opinion of our countrymen." Three hearty cheers, from the whole crew, evinced their approbation of the boatswain's sentiments. They then drank

* The "*ten hulls*" alluded to an Act of Congress, then recently passed for building *four* 74's and *six* Frigates.

to this toast, so perfectly in character with American tars—

"*American ships, all over the ocean.*"

At this time, Comm. Decatur, and his accomplished Lieutenant, W. H. Allen, entered the hall. The presence of the Commodore heightened their previous rapture. He gave as a toast—

"*Free trade and no impressments,*"

which was received with an enthusiasm peculiar to sailors. He communicated to them the request of the managers of the Theatre, that they would attend in the evening; and the whole pit was appropriated for their accommodation. The Commodore addressed them nearly in these words—"Sailors!—Your orderly and decorous conduct this day, gives me high satisfaction. Continue it through this evening; and convince the hospitable and patriotic citizens of New-York, that you can maintain the same order in the midst of amusements as you have done, when sailing upon the ocean and conquering the enemy." It was answered by the well known and respectful salute of sailors. The admirable band of the Macedonian again cheered them with patriotic airs. Excepting the lowering of an enemy's flag, this world could not afford a scene more exhilarating to such a man as STEPHEN DECATUR.

One act of noble munificence in this truly noble crew, must not be omitted. Upon receiving their prize money, every one of the seamen immediately paid two dollars each, making a fund of nearly *nine hundred dollars*, for the benefit of the orphan children of *John Archibald*, who died by wounds received in the action with the Macedonian. Comm. Decatur placed the mo-

ney in the hands of suitable trustees, and received from the father of Archibald, an address of thanks, couched in the impressive language of a grateful heart. But he *looked* his gratitude more forcibly than he *expressed* it. On such an occasion—

> "A *glance* sends *volumes* to the *heart*,
> While *words impassioned* die."

The benevolent, the humane, the generous Decatur, upon this, and on numerous other occasions, enjoyed—"the luxury of doing good." It was not to his friends alone, to whom he extended the helping hand of humanity—to his enemies, when not inconsistent with his duty, he was a ministering angel of mercy.

When he took possession of the Macedorian, he found her filled, not only with every munition and material of war, but with almost all the luxuries of the palace. He found an opportunity to repay the accomplished and gallant Capt. Carden for the many civilities he had shewn to American officers, while upon the American station. Every thing in the ship which belonged to the government as prize, he scrupulously accounted for; but every individual article that belonged to the officers and seamen, he punctiliously restored, or liberally paid for. Capt. Carden had the finest band of music in the British Navy, and the choicest supply of wine, &c. for his own cabin. These and other conveniences to the amount of nearly a thousand dollars, Comm. Decatur paid him for. Let the face of the commander of the *Poictiers* 74, be crimsoned with shame, or turn pale with fear, when reminded that after capturing the Wasp, 18, he deprived the gallant

Capt. Jones and his crew of every article except the clothes that covered their bodies; and that these noble Americans never shifted their dress, until they were exchanged, and arrived in a cartel in America.* Let another fact connected with the Macedonian which this same Capt. Jones was appointed to command, be mentioned by way of contrast between the American and British governments, and between American and British naval officers. The following is an extract from the Muster Roll of the Macedonian, when captured by Comm. Decatur.

"Christopher Dodge, American, aged 32, prest by the Thisbe, late Dedaigneuse, shipped in the Macedonian July 1, 1810.

Peter Johnson, American, aged 32, prest by the Dedalus, entered August 24, 1810.

John Alexander, of Cape Ann, aged 29, prest by the Dedalus, entered August 25, 1810.

C. Dolphin, of Connecticut, aged 22, prest by the Namur, late Ceres, entered August 4, 1810.

Major Cook, of Baltimore, aged 27, prest by the Royal William, late Mercury, entered Sept. 10, 1810.

William Thompson, of Boston, aged 20, prest at Lis-

* When the gallant seamen of the late ship Wasp arrived at the seat of government, the Secretary of the Navy, and other gentlemen visited them in their destitute situation; the Secretary shook them each by the hand---applauded them for their gallantry in action, and fortitude under privations; and gave orders for an immediate supply of every comfort and convenience. These men ever afterwards would fight desperately against the brutal enemy, and valiantly for their country.

bon, entered Jan. 16, 1811, drowned at sea in boarding an American.

John Wallis, American, aged 23, prest by the Triton, entered Feb. 16, 1811, killed in action in the Macedonian!

John Card, American, aged 27, prest by the North Star, entered April 13, 1811, killed in action in the Macedonian!"

Let the vaunting "Queen of the Ocean" boast of her thousand ships and matchless commanders; and as *Macbeth* shuddered at the ghost of *Banquo*, let her shudder at the ghosts of *Thompson*, *Wallis* and *Card*, compelled to fight their own countrymen, and perhaps to spill their brother's blood. But their blood has been avenged, so far as man *can* avenge; and it is for that Being who "reigns in the armies of heaven above" to administer eternal justice.

# CHAPTER XIII.

Honours conferred upon Comm. Decatur—He takes command of a Squadron—Immense disparity between American and British Naval force on the American coast—List of both—Comm. Decatur sails from New York in Squadron—His ship struck by lightning—Sails for a British 74—Retreats to New London—Prepares for defence—*Razees*—British Squadron—Contrast between *Hardy* and *Cockburn*—Stratagems of War—Passport for the bodies of Lawrence and Ludlow—Comm. Deaatur attempts to escape—Blue Lights—Steam Frigate—Challenge to the enemy—Impressed seamen—Dignified and humane officers—Comm. Decatur and Comm. Macdonough.

Comm. Decatur might now be said to be at the zenith of glory. Honours flowed in upon him in such rapid succession, that if the thirst for fame and the appetite for glory could ever be satisfied, *he* might well say "it is enough"—and yet, when acknowledging the honours conferred upon him and his gallant officers and seamen, his unassuming language was—"MAY THEY STIMULATE US TO ACTS MORE PROPORTIONED TO THEIR APPROBATION." It might well be asked what deeds could DECATUR perform, that would be "more proportioned" to the highest approbation that could be bestowed than what he had already achieved? I do not here allude to his last achievement—brilliant as it surely was, it was even surpassed by those of his early life, and such I trust is the opinion of the readers of these imperfect sketches.

Promotion he could not receive, for at twenty-five, he reached the highest grade of office in the American

Navy. The almost endless series of promotions in the Navy of Britain, opens a wide door for her officers to pass through to naval honours. Admirals, and vice-Admirals—Admirals of the *white*, the *red*, and the *blue*, and Rear-Admirals almost *ad infinitum*, afford titles of honour to a numerous host of officers, whether they have earned them by deeds of valour, or acquired them by court favouritism. The titles of *duke*, *earl*, *marquis*, *viscount*, *baronet* and *knight*, are also within the gift of the crown; and it will be recollected that plain Capt. Broke of the Shannon, was "dubbed a knight" for *capturing by a fortunate circumstance*, the ill-starred frigate Chesapeake, *after* she had fairly *beaten* the Shannon.

The most grateful reward to the gallant and noble Decatur, was the thanks of his government, and the applause of his countrymen. They were far higher in his estimation, than a dukedom, or peerage with a princely *estate*, torn from the hard earnings of humble and patient industry. These he enjoyed in full fruition. Nor were they *new* honours to him. Ten years before, he received from Congress, his COMMISSION, a VOTE OF THANKS, and a SWORD.

The CORGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES voted their *thanks* to Comm. Decatur, his Officers and Seamen, for the capture of the Macedonian—a gold medal to him, and a silver one to each of his officers.

The *State Legislatures* of *Pennsylvania* and *Massachusetts* also voted *thanks* to the Commodore, his Officers and Seamen—and the *Legislature of Virginia* presented elegant *swords* to him, and to Lieuts. W. H. Allen, and J. B. Nicholson, for the same achievement.

The *Citizens* of *Philadelphia*, (for "those who knew him best, loved him most") presented him with a sword of *pure* solid gold, of little less value than one thousand dollars. Perhaps the *pecuniary* value of it ought not to be mentioned; as neither the givers or the receiver thought of it in any other point of view, than as a token of admiration on the one part, and an evidence on the other of consummate skill, gallant courage, and devoted patriotism.

Sumptuous public dinners, and splendid public balls, were given to the Commodore wherever he could be found; and had duty or inclination led him *to travel by land*, he unquestionably would have been urged, and almost compelled, to have *eaten and danced his passage through the whole Republic*. But he rather preferred to make another attempt *to fight his passage o'er the ocean*, through the thickening ships of the enemy, which, at this period, almost encircled the whole country.

Comm. Decatur, soon after his return to America, from his *second* brilliant cruise, was appointed to the command of a Squadron, consisting of the frigate *United States* (his flag ship)—the frigate *Macedonian*, Capt. JONES—and the Sloop of War *Hornet*, Capt. BIDDLE. These gallant and persevering officers devoted themselves, with unceasing assiduity, in fitting their ships for sea. The Frigate U. States, and the Sloop Hornet, notwithstanding the first had recently captured a first rate British Frigate, and the last had sunk a British ship of superior force, needed but little repairs; yet the *Macedonian* was rendered almost a wreck, and

needed thorough repairs. The Squadron was fitted for sea by the 24th May, 1813.

While preparing this Squadron for sea, Comm. Decatur, Capts. Jones and Biddle, enjoyed the high satisfaction of learning the splendid victory of the noble and gallant Comm. Bainbridge, of the frigate *Constitution*, over the British frigate *Java*, Capt. Lambert, and that of Capt. Lawrence, of the sloop of war *Hornet*, over the British sloop of war *Peacock*, Capt. Peake. The history of Naval Warfare scarcely affords a parallel with these two victories. The new and elegant ship Java all but sunk in the action, and was afterwards blown up as a worthless wreck—her commander mortally wounded—60 men killed, and 170 wounded. The sloop of war Peacock, one of the finest of her class, sunk even before the whole of the conquered crew could be gotten on board the Hornet. What enhanced the interest of these victories, was the delightful, and yet glorious association of ideas. The writer has frequently, in the later periods of Comm. Decatur's life, recurred back to his Mediterranean achievements. How forcibly may we recur to them in this place? *Bainbridge*, *Jones* and *Biddle*, were once in the most dismal bondage in Tripoli—*Decatur* and *Lawrence* led in the destruction of the frigate Philadelphia, which hastened their emancipation! They *commenced* their naval intimacy in scenes of common dangers, and common misery—it had now *advanced* to the high exultation of common victories obtained by them all over the mistress of the ocean. Never had a whole class of men so much reason to admire each other, as the American Naval Officers, who began their career of suf-

ferings and victory in the Mediterranean, and who have so gloriously conquered in the Atlantic.

The immense disparity of Naval force between America and Britain at the commencement of the war, has been alluded to in *general* terms. It may gratify the reader to learn more *particularly* the force of the enemy, when the undaunted and fearless DECATUR, commenced his *third* cruise. The statement is derived from a source which will not be disputed, as it comes from the very loyal Mr *Steele*, whose annual "Navy List, of the Royal Navy of Great Britain" and their several "Stations" is made under the inspection of the "Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty," and more particularly under that of 'John Wilson Crocker, Esq.' This List for January 1st, 1813, assigns the following ships to the several stations undermentioned :—

BERMUDA STATION.

| *Names.* | *Guns.* | *Commanders.* |
|---|---|---|
| Minerva | 32 | R. Hawkins, esq. |
| Frolic, brig | 18 | ——Whinyates. |
| Sylph | 18 | Wm. Evans. |
| Muros, brig | 14 | Lt. C. Hobart. |

London papers of the 10th of January, stated that a squadron of 19 sail of the line, several large frigates, (razees) and 5 bomb vessels, would instantly proceed to the coast of America, to bombard some of the principal ports. The following are named as part of that force. Some of them were then on our coast.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Royal Oak | 74 | R'r Ad. L'd A. Beauclerc. Capt. F. G. Shortland. |
| Egmont | 74 | Joseph Bingham, esq. |
| *La Hogue* | 74 | Hon. T. B. Capel. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Norge | 74 | L. S. Regnier, esq. |
| *Valiant* | 74 | R. D. Oliver. |
| Tiger | 74 | John Halliday. |
| Abercrombie | 74 | C. W. Fahie, esq. |
| Queen | 80 | Rt. Hon. Lord J. Colville. |
| *Theseus | 74 | Wm. Prouse, esq. |
| Bellona | 74 | Geo. M'Kinley, esq. |
| Revolutionaire | 44 | P. L. Woolcombe, esq. |
| Desiree | 36 | Arthur Farquahar. |
| Neimen | 38 | Samuel Pym. |
| Mutine, brig | 18 | N. D. Courcy. |

** Going first off the Western Islands.*

## CRUISING OFF THE WESTERN ISLANDS.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Elephant | 74 | C. J. Austin, esq. |
| Dublin | 74 | R. Henderson, esq. |
| Inconstant | 36 | E. W. C. R. Owens, esq. |
| Hermes | 20 | Philip Browne, esq. |
| Rolla, brig | 10 | Wm. Hall, esq. |

## HALIFAX STATION.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| San Domingo | 74 | Ad. Sir J. B. Warren, bt.<br>Capt. Charles Gill. |
| Cumberland | 74 | Thomas Baker, esq. |
| Marlborough | 74 | Rear Ad. Cockburn, knt.<br>Capt. B. H. Ross. |
| Poictiers | 74 | Sir J. P. Beresford, knt. |
| *Ramilies* | 74 | Sir Thomas Hardy, bart. |
| Grampus | 50 | Robert Barrie, esq. |
| *Acasta* | 40 | A. R. Kerr, esq. |
| Junon | 38 | James Saunders, esq. |
| Nymphe | 38 | E. P. Epworth, esq. |
| Sea-Horse | 38 | J. A. Gordon, esq. |
| Shannon | 38 | P. B. V. Broke, esq. |
| Spartan | 38 | E. P. Brenton, esq. |
| *Statira* | 38 | Hassard Stackpole, esq. |
| Tenedos | 38 | Hyde Parker, esq. |
| Belvidera | 36 | Richard Byron, esq. |
| Maidstone | 36 | Geo. Burdett, esq. |
| *Orpheus* | 36 | Hugh Pigott, esq. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Æolus | 32 | Lord J. Townsend. |
| Laurestinus | 24 | Thomas Graham, esq. |
| Fawn | 20 | Thomas Fellows, esq. |
| Tartarus | 20 | John Pasco, esq. |
| Wanderer | 20 | F. Newcomb, esq. |
| Arachne, brig | 18 | C. H. Watson, esq. |
| Arab do. | 18 | John Wilson, esq. |
| Atalante do. | 18 | Frederick Hickey, esq. |
| Colibri do. | 18 | J. Thompson, esq. |
| Curlew do. | 18 | Michael Head, esq. |
| Goree | 18 | Hon. H. D. Byng. |
| Heron, brig | 18 | Wm. M'Culloch, esq. |
| Martin | 18 | John Evans, Esq. |
| Morgiana* | 18 | David Scott, esq. |
| Moselle, brig | 18 | ——— Mowbray, esq. |
| Recruit | 18 | H. F. Banhouse, esq. |
| Sophia, brig | 18 | N. Luckyer, esq. |
| Magnet, do. | 16 | D. M. Maurice, esq. |
| Ratler | 16 | A. Gordon, esq. |
| *Plumper, gun brig, | 12 | Lt. J. Bray. |
| Variable | 12 | R. R. B. Yates. |
| Holly, schr. | 8 | Lt. S. S. Treacher. |
| Bream, do. | 4 | Lt. C. D. Browne. |
| Cuttle, do. | 4 | Lt. W. L. Patterson. |
| Fierce, do. | 4 | ——— ——— |
| Herring, do. | 4 | Lt. John Murray. |
| Mackarel, do. | 4 | Lt. T. H. Hutchinson. |

* *Lost near Eastport, Maine.*

The following vessels were on the Jamaica and Leeward Island Stations, and on passage to the West Indies, the 1st of January :

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Dragon | 74 | R'r ad. Sir F. Laforey, bt. Capt. F. A. Collier. |
| Arethusa | 38 | |
| Sybelle | 38 | C. Upton, esq. *convoy*. |
| *Southampton | 32 | Sir James Yeo. |
| Jason | 32 | Hon. Wm. King. |
| Narcissus | 32 | J. R. Lumley. |
| Mercury (*en flute*) | 28 | C. Milward. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Garland | 22 | ——— Davies. |
| Coquette | 20 | John Simpson. |
| *Cyane | 20 | Thomas Forrest. |
| Lightning | 20 | B. C. Doyle. |
| Brazen | 18 | |
| Bold, brig | 18 | John Skekel. |
| Crane | 18 | James Stuart. |
| Dauntless | 18 | D. Barber. } *convoy with* |
| Demerara, g. b. | 18 | W. H. Smith. } *the Sybelle.* |
| Peruvian, brig, | 18 | A. F. Westropp. |
| Indian | 18 | Henry Jane. |
| Sappho, brig, | 18 | H. O'Gready. |
| Sapphire | 18 | Henry Haynes. |
| Maria, brig, | 16 | Lieut. Bligh. |
| Swaggerer, | 16 | G. J. Evelyn. |
| Protection, g. b. | 14 | Lieut. G. Mitchener, convoy with Sybelle. |
| Liberty, cutter b. | 14 | Lieut. G. M. Guise. |
| Morne Fortunee, b. | 14 | J. Steele. |
| Netley, sch. | 14 | G. Green. |
| Spider, b. | 14 | F. G. Willoch. |
| Elizabeth, sch. | 12 | Lieut. Edward F. Droyer. |
| Rapide, do. | 12 | N. W. Pere. |
| Algerine, cutter, | 10 | D. Carpenter. |
| *Dominico, g. b. | 10 | Robert Hockings. |
| Opossum, do. | 10 | Thomas woolridge. |
| Ballahou, sch. | 8 | Norfolk King. |
| Green Linnet | 6 | |
| †Subtle | 8 | Lieut. Charles Browne. |

**Lost on the Bahama Keys.*

*†Upset and sunk while in chase of the American privateer Jack's Favorite.*

NEWFOUNDLAND STATION.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Antelope | 50 | Adm. Sir E. Nagle, bart. Capt. Edward Hawkes. |
| Hyperion | 32 | W. P. Cumby, esq. |
| Electra | 18 | Wm. Gregory, esq. |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Hazard | 18 | John Cooksley, esq. |
| *Alert | 16 | Lieut. Wm. Smith. |
| Juniper | 8 | N. Vassal. |

* *Captured by the Essex.*

The *Gurriere*, the *Macedonian*, the *Java*, the *Peacock*, and the *Frolick*, *once* belonged to this List. The *names* of the *first*, and *three* last, although not the same *timbers*, were *afterwards* added to the American Navy List.

Again,—"*Look upon* THAT *Picture, and then upon this.*"—It would make the reader think of "little Iulus" following after "Anchises."

NAVY OF THE UNITED STATES, IN 1813.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| President | 44 | Comm. Rodgers. |
| United States | 44 | Decatur. |
| Constitution | 44 | Capt. Lawrence. |
| Macedonian | 38 | Jones. |
| Congress | 36 | Smith. |
| Chesapeake | 36 | Evans. |
| Constellation | 36 | Stewart. |
| New-York | 36 | Repairing at Washington. |
| Boston | 32 | do. do. |
| Essex | 32 | Capt. Porter. |
| Adams | 32 | Morris. |
| John Adams | 26 | Ludlow. |
| Alert | 18 | ——— |
| Hornet | 18 | ——— |
| Argus | 16 | Lieut. Allen. |
| Syren | 16 | Mast. Com. J. Bainbridge. |
| Enterpize | 14 | Lieut. Blakely. |
| Troup | 14 | Grandison. |
| Nonsuch | 12 | ——— |

The fastidious disciples of the "Doctrine of Chances," would feel that wonder, which is the effect of timidity upon weakness, that the government of the American Republic, or its Naval officers, should pre-

sume to expose a ship or a seaman to the destruction of such an overwhelming superiority of force. The government and its officers knew what had been accomplished, and were not to be deterred by *fear* from further attempts. They took no counsel from that paralyzing passion in the breast of dotards.

Comm. Decatur received his sailing orders with exultation, and Capts. Jones and Biddle panted for an opportunity to gather further laurels.

Upon the 24th of May, the Commodore's broad pendant waved from the head of his favourite frigate United States. The "Star spangled Banner" held the place once occupied by "St. George's Cross" on the Macedonian; and the little Hornet still retained her stings. They passed into the sound; and when off Hunt's Point, the main-mast of the Commodore's ship was struck with lightning, and his broad pendant came down; being compelled, surely, in this instance, to yield to a "SUPERIOR FORCE." It entered a port-hole —went down the after hatchway, through the ward-room, into the Surgeon's room—tore up his bed, and put out his candle—then passed between the skin and cieling of the ship, and tore up about twenty nails of her copper at the water's edge. The Macedonian, but 100 yards astern, hove her top-sails aback, fearing the fire might find its way to the magazine. The Squadron, however, was soon again under full sail.

Upon June 1st, a British 74 was discovered off the harbour of New-London. Immediate sail was made for her, and a prize was already taken in anticipation. At this moment the remainder of the British squadron —a 74, a *Razee*, and a frigate, showed themselves,

coming from their *covert* behind Montauk Point. This force was almost as irresistible as the lightning from which the American squadron had recently escaped; and it made good its retreat into the harbour of New-London; not, however, until the Commodore's ship gave the *razee* a few shots from her stern-chasers.

Such are the sudden changes in the fortune of naval warfare. The Commodore found himself blockaded in the same port into which he lately conducted the first British frigate as a *prize*, that ever entered an American harbour.

Expecting from the great force of the enemy an immediate attack, the squadron was prepared, aided by the military force at forts Trumbull and Griswold, to give Sir Thos. M. Hardy a reception as warm and more effectual than his adored Nelson found at Copenhagen.

As this is the first time *Razees* have been mentioned, some readers may wish for a *description*, of what, however, may properly be called a *non descript* in naval armaments. They are actually 74 gun-ships, with a little portion of their decks *cut down*, and the exclusion of their smaller guns which are of but little use in close engagements. They are deemed by the first naval characters, a full match for two first rate frigates. The wary admiralty of Old England, after seeing their finest frigates for the first time bowing to an equal force, designed these mongrel bulwarks of her prowess, for contests with American frigates, and denominated them *razees!* If a double *entendre* were allowable upon a subject that ought to excite contempt, we might safely venture to say that in single combat with a plain American 44, they would be *razeed* of more deck and more

guns than what the British naval *architects* would *approve* of. The admiralty of Britain, by this measure, bestowed the highest compliment upon American officers and seamen, and virtually acknowledged their own inferiority in conflicts between *equal* forces—and the crown would probably have *knighted* the commander of a *British razee* for capturing an *American frigate.*

Comm. Decatur moored his squadron five miles above the town, and took every precautionary measure, in conjunction with the United States' forces in the forts and the Connecticut militia, which immediately appeared, to prepare for a vigorous defence. His presence and example inspired confidence in every bosom, and imparted the ardent glow of patriotism to every heart. Although Comm. Decatur, Capts. Jones and Biddle, their officers and seamen were driven, by a force wholly irresistible by them, from their chosen element,—and that formidable force still menacing them and the country, yet, spirits like theirs were never created to "despair of the Republic." The first had long been familiar with scenes of carnage and death in their most horrid forms, and the second and the third had endured the horrors of a lengthened bondage amongst the most ferocious and merciless of barbarians—and all had been in victorious conflicts with the mistress of the ocean.

It would not comport with the intended limits of this volume, to detail all the minor events that took place in the naval and military forces at, and near New-London, during the long period the American Squadron was there blockaded. The British Squadron under Sir *Thomas M. Hardy*, was at all times too formidable to *attack* and too vigilant to *escape*. It originally consist-

ed of the *Ramilies*, 74, Sir T. M. Hardy—*Valiant*, 74, R. D. Oliver—*Acasta*, 40, A. R. Kerr—*Orpheus*, 36, H. Pigott. The *Statira*, 38, H. Stackpole, ("sister-ship" of the Macedonian,) and *La Hogue*, 74, and *Endymion*, 44, afierwards joined; besides Tenders, Barges, Boats, &c. &c. Sir Thomas could diminish or augment his squadron at pleasure, as there were always British ships enough within a few days call.

It might be considered as a fortunate circumstance for the citizens of Connecticut and New-York, resident on the borders of Long-Island sound, that such a noble and magnanimous enemy as Sir T. M. Hardy, commanded in those waters. The inhabitants upon the waters and the borders of the Chesapeake suffered a far different destiny where the sanguinary and detested *Cockburn*. held dominion. HARDY, one of the heroes of Trafalgar, and who received the dying Nelson in his arms on board the *Victory*, scorned to make war upon unresisting weakness. But let the fate of *Hampton*, *Havre de Grace*, *Frenchtown and Fredericktown* be remembered; and to place Cockburn upon the very pinnacle of infamy for "*scorn to point its slow unmoving finger at*," let the wanton destruction of the Capitol, the President's house, the National Library, and the dilapidations upon the Naval Monument at Washington be brought to light. It is almost with a blush I mention the name of this paragon of infamy upon the same page with the valiant Hardy, who never violated the established principles of civilized warfare. Scarcely a living animal was taken from the islands or the main without they were paid for, or offered pay refused.* No defence-

*——— Gardner, Esq. proprietor of Gardner's island, refused pay for twenty head of fine cattle.

less villager was driven in despair from his burning mansion; no unprotected female suffered violence from brutal passion. This truly noble Hero knew his duty to his king and country, and he performed it. His squadron captured every merchantman within its reach. One detachment of it destroyed a large amount of shipping at *Pettipaug*—another made a "*demonstration*" upon the borough of *Stonington*, and were repulsed by the unparalleled heroism of the *citizens*. He would most gladly have recaptured the *Macedonian*, and have been delighted to have added the frigate United States and the sloop of War Hornet to the "Royal Navy;" but he knew that a Decatur, as valiant and magnanimous as himself, was placed as a watchman upon these wooden walls of the Republic. Sir Thomas could do nothing but smile at the gasconading threat of one of his officers, "*That they meant to have the Macedonian if they followed her into a cornfield.*" Undoubtedly they would have rejoiced to *reap* such a prize in any field. But Comm. Hardy's "system of navigation" would hardly admit of *gathering a crop* on such an element.

Although Comm. Decatur, and Comm. Hardy would prefer an ocean-battle, to obtain a conquest, yet *stratagem* has always been practised to obtain the same object. Such was resorted to by the commanders of the *Valiant* and *Acasta*, to decoy Comm. Decatur into the hands of the enemy. About the middle of June, these ships left their stations—captured a coasting vessel, and assured the master of her, that the Valiant had struck upon a rock, and that the Acasta was going with her to Halifax for repairs, and to take out the crew if

she should sink. In a week they returned with an additional Frigate and a Brig of War!

Upon the 19th June, the day upon which war was declared the year preceding, the American flag was hoisted *under* that of the British on board their squadron. Had *that* flag been taken in action with an equal force, there would have been more meaning in it. *They* could distinctly see the American flag upon the mast of the *Macedonian.*

Upon the 25th a schooner fitted out as a sort of fire-ship at New-York, by a Mr. Scudder, who acknowledged the fact, exploded near the British squadron, destroyed some boats and about 100 men. Comm. Hardy, probably supposing it to have originated in Comm. Decatur's squadron, sent the following note on shore by a flag of truce.

"The inhabitants of Stonington, New-London and the vicinity, are hereby informed, that after this date, no boat of any description shall be suffered to approach or pass his Britannic majesty's squadron, lying off New-London, flags of truce excepted.

Given on board his majesty's ship Ramilies, the 26th June, 1813.

T. M. HARDY, Capt."

Although the gallant and lamented Gen. Pike, died by a *British stratagem* still more unusual than this, yet Comm. Decatur, as the reader will presently learn, *proposed* a different mode to take or destroy the British squadron than by that of blowing it up with fire ships, or torpedoes.

Comm. Decatur, about the first of September, received from Comm. Bainbridge the original British passport for the Brig Henry, fitted out by the patriotic George Crowninshield and manned by twelve sea-captains, to proceed from Salem, (Mass.) to Halifax, and to bring to their native land the bodies of the gallant and lamented Capt. LAWRENCE and Lieut. LUDLOW who fell in the Chesapeake frigate. The object was, to enable Comm. Decatur to obtain an extension of the same passport, from the commanding officer of this station, for the *Henry* to proceed to New York with the bodies. The Commodore immediately dispatched Lieut. Nicholson with a flag of truce, and a letter addressed to Sir T. M. Hardy, "*or the officer commanding H. B. M. Squadron off New London.*" Capt. *Oliver* of the Valiant was the "officer commanding." Lieut. Nicholson was ordered to lie by with his boat, in weather extremely boisterous, and was refused the privilege of coming to the leeward of the Valiant, for protection. An officer was sent on board the flag-boat—the dispatches were sent to Capt. Oliver, with the original passport. After an hour's detention, a letter was sent on board to Comm. Decatur, informing him that his letter and the passport would be sent to Comm. Hardy, then at Halifax!

The feelings of Comm. Decatur on receipt of the letter, can neither be described nor conceived. In consequence of this refusal, the bodies of these sleeping heroes were transported *by land*, from Salem through Massachusetts and Connecticut to New-York. That this refusal should not appear too glaring an outrage upon humanity, it ought to be mentioned that Capt.

Oliver, *subsequently*, when it was *too late* to have effect, granted the request !

While Comm. Decatur's squadron was rendered thus inactive, and driven from the *ocean*, a " fresh water" squadron, surrounded by a wilderness, achieved a deed which produced inexpressible astonishment in the enemy, and joy as inexpressible with Americans. As Comm. *Perry's* victory upon *Lake Erie* was the *first* gained over the enemy *in squadron*, as Capt. Hull's was the *first* over a *single ship*, they have been echoed and re-echoed, until it might be supposed that the thirst for praise itself, would have been saturated. This capture of the British squadron upon Lake Erie is an *anomaly* in the history of naval warfare. Although Nelson had taught the manner of breaking through an enemy's line, yet it was for Comm. Perry to leave his *own disabled ship* in the hands of his *Lieutenant*, who reluctantly struck her flag—take the ship of the next officer in command, almost uninjured, and dispatch *him* on another service—then, with his *fresh ship*, aided by the gallantry and skill of her *former commander*, in bringing *fresh ships* into close action, to gain a decided victory, is surely without a parallel. Comm. Perry, and Capt. Elliot set a new example ; whether it ever will be followed, must be left for future naval conflicts to determine. Particulars must here be omitted ; but they may be learned from Comm. Perry's *three official letters* to the *Secretary of the Navy ;* and his *three civil letters* to *Maj. Gen. Harrison.* The General aided the Commodore in obtaining the victory upon water—the Commodore, in return aided the General in conquering upon land.

But such are the sudden reverses of those who travel the road to fame, that they are often compelled to mingle the tears of grief, with the smiles of triumph. Scarce had the exhilaration of joy excited in the bosom of Comm. Decatur by the victory upon *Lake Erie* subsided, before the death of one of his former favourite lieutenants was announced. After the capture of the *Macedonian*, Lieut. W. H. ALLEN, was promoted, and ordered to take command of the *Argus*, the *first* armed vessel that Decatur commanded. He carried the American minister to France, and repaired to the Irish channel, where, in a short time, he captured British property to the amount of $2,000,000, as *they* confess; yet they admired the hand that struck them, it was raised with so much dignity and fell with so much humanity. When Capt. Allen fell himself, nobly fighting the *Pelican* upon the 14th August, and was buried in the midst of the enemies he had so nobly fought, their demonstrations of respect for his character, speak his highest eulogy. He was interred with the honours of war; and the American flag under which he had gallantly fought, enclosed his reliques as they were borne to the vault, where his slain midshipman, Mr. *Delphy* had previously been deposited. Like the gallant LAWRENCE, he fearlessly fought—he nobly fell—and was—

"By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd."

Upon the 4th October, Comm. Decatur abandoned the fort he had erected on Dragon Hill—descended the river about three miles, determining to watch every possible opportunity to escape from his irksome and disheartening situation. It was doubtless as irksome

for Comm. Hardy to *blockade*, as it was for Comm. Decatur to be *blockaded*—they both preferred a more active and glorious service. But the fortune of war had placed them in this situation ; and if it had been the pleasure of their several governments, that they should have remained in it *during life*, they must either have fought their way out of it,—submitted to it, or left a service from which they derived their highest enjoyment.

The vigilance of the blockading squadron was such, that no opportunity, for a long time occurred to attempt an escape with any hopes of success. Indeed, it was the bounden duty of the British squadron, to prevent Comm. Decatur's escape, or to capture or destroy his ship ; and if they had failed to do one of them, every officer in the enemy's squadron would have met with the severe punishment which a British naval court-martial invariably inflict for the most trifling omission of duty or commission of error.

It is always the policy of war to obtain the most correct intelligence of an enemy's situation—the amount of his force—his movements, and, if possible, his *intentions*. The British almost invariably have their emissaries in the midst of their enemies. *It is easy*, from the similarity of language, and appearance, to introduce their *own subjects* into an American Squadron, or Encampment ; and such is the weakness or corruption of man, *it is not hard*, even to bribe their *enemies* with gold. That the British had emissaries of one or the other character at New-London, is placed beyond the doubts even of stubborn incredulity, unless of that stubbornness which is often the last subterfuge of guilt.

The citizens of *New-London* and *Groton* had passed through the very extremity of sufferings, inflicted upon them by the most execrable of *traitors—Benedict Arnold*; and the most remote suspicion of *treason*, could not for a moment attach itself to them. Their patriotism in the *first* war between the Republic and Britain —and the avidity with which they flew to arms in the *second*, to defend Comm. Decatur's squadron, most forcibly repels the least imputation of disaffection. But they *had* in the midst of them, either foreign emissaries, or domestic traitors, from *some where*; and they could not detect them. Even the chosen followers of the Redeemer innocently harboured and caressed an unknown traitor; and if an *American* accepted of "thirty pieces of silver," or thirty thousand of gold, to betray his country, it is not to be regretted if he has met with the fate of *Iscariot*.

But let the language of the noble, the patriotic, and, in this instance, the indignant DECATUR, speak for itself.

"*New-London, Dec. 20th*, 1813.

"Some few nights since, the weather promised an opportunity for this squadron to get to sea, and it was said on shore that we intended to make the attempt. In the course of the evening two blue lights were burnt on both the points at the harbour's mouth as signals to the enemy, and there is not a doubt, but that they have by signals and otherwise, instantaneous information of our movements. Great but unsuccessful exertions have been made to detect those who communinate with the enemy by signal. The editor of the New-

London Gazette, to alarm them, and in hope to prevent the repetition of these signals, stated in that newspaper, that they had been observed, and ventured to denounce those who had made them in animated and indignant terms. The consequence is, that he has incurred the express censure of some of his neighbours. Notwithstanding these signals have been repeated, and have been seen by 20 persons at least in this squadron, there are men in N. London who have the hardihood to affect to disbelieve it, and the effrontery to avow their disbelief. I am, sir, with the highest consideration and respect, your very obedient and humble servant.

(Signed) STEPHEN DECATUR.

*Hon. Wm. Jones, Secretary of the Navy.*

Here let the gloomy subject rest. The bosom of the patriot cannot be disturbed by it; and as to the traitors who "*burnt the two blue lights*," if still in existence, may their pillows be pillows of thorns—may their sleep be agony; and may they even be deprived of tears to appease the gnawings of guilt, until they *confess* it, and become the subjects of human justice, and, if so decreed, of divine mercy.

Comm. Decatur, Capts. Jones and Biddle, as they could not escape, and as the enemy would not attack them at anchor, turned their attention to a new species of naval armament, invented by that unequalled mechanist, ROBERT FULTON. As it is embraced in the object of this work to blend with the biography of Comm. Decatur "*brief notices of the origin, progress and achievements of the American Navy*," it is deemed useful to furnish the reader with his opinion and that of other

distinguished naval characters, of FULTON'S STEAM FRIGATE.

"*New-London, January* 3, 1814.

We, the undersigned, have this day examined the model and plans of a vessel of war, submitted to us by Robert Fulton, to carry 24 guns, 24 or 32 pounders, and use red hot shot to be propelled by steam at the speed of from 4 to 5 miles an hour, without the aid of wind or tide. The properties of which vessel are: That without masts or sails, she can move with sufficient speed; that her machinery being guarded, she cannot be crippled; that her sides are so thick as to be impenetrable to every kind of shot—and in a calm or light breeze, she can take choice of position or distance from an enemy. Considering the speed which the application of steam has already given to heavy floating bodies, we have full confidence, that should such a vessel move only four miles an hour, she could, under favourable circumstances which may always be gained over enemies' vessels in our ports, harbours, bays, and sounds, be rendered more formidable to an enemy than any kind of engine hitherto invented. And in such case she would be equal to the destruction of one or more 74's, or of compelling her or them to depart from our waters. We, therefore, give it as our decided opinion, that it is among the best interests of the United States, to carry this plan into immediate execution.

(Signed) STEPHEN DECATUR.
J. JONES.
J. BIDDLE.

*New York, Jan.* 10, 1814.

We, the subscribers, having examined the model of the above described vessel of war, to be propelled by steam, do fully concur in the above opinion of the practicability and utility of the same.

(Signed) SAMUEL EVANS,
O. H. PERRY.
L. WARRINGTON.
J. LEWIS."

It is to be regretted, that this novel, floating engine of destruction had not been in readiness to test its power upon the Royal Navy of Britain in the second war; and although a *third* one is to be deprecated, it is ardently hoped by every lover of the Republic that in a future war with that or any other power, such engines or some others, may protect our "ports, harbours, bays and sounds" from the depredation of every hostile intruder.

To return to Comm. Decatur, and his blockaded squadron, and to Comm. Hardy who was still blockading him. Capt. *Moran*, had been captured and was on board the Ramilies. Sir Thomas remarked to him —"Now that two frigates were off, of equal force to the *United States* and *Macedonian*, he should have no objections to a meeting taking place, but that he could not allow the challenge to come from the *English commanders*." Capt. Moran was paroled—came on shore, and without knowing Comm. Decatur, mentioned the circumstance in his hearing. He immediately dispatched Capt. Biddle in a flag of truce, with a challenge from the *American commanders*. The crews of the *United*

States and *Macedonian* were called, and laconically addressed. Comm. Decatur said—"Officers and seamen —You will shortly be called upon again to try your skill and valour. This ship and his Britannic Majesty's ship *Endymion* of equal force will speedily try their strength. You are accustomed to victory, and you will not tarnish the glory you have already won. I have no fears for the result."

The ardent, yet modest Capt. Jones, addressed his officers and seamen nearly as follows.—"My lads—the *Macedonian* was once conquered by American tars, and she will soon have an opportunity to gain a victory herself. You have not forgotten the Sloop of war Frolic, and you will shortly be introduced to the Frigate Statira. My lads—our cruise will be short, and I trust a very profitable one."—Three hearty cheers were given in answer to these addresses.

Comm. Hardy, by signals, called the commanders of the Endymion and Statira on board the Ramilies, and modestly said to them—"Gentlemen, here are two letters for you—it rests altogether with *you* to decide the matter."—Capt. Stackpole answered—"'Pon honour, sir, it is the most acceptable letter I ever received." Capt. *Hope* of the Endymion was less boisterous and probably more courageous.

All was animation in the frigates United States and Macedonian. The officers and seamen were anxious to be led immediately into the contest—when lo! the Borer sloop of war came in and informed that the invitation had been *finally* declined!

A correspondence followed upon this subject between Commodores Decatur and Hardy, and Capt.

Stackpole, quite too prolix for insertion at length. A paragraph from Stackpole's letter will be introduced to show the difference between him, and those who know what belongs to an accomplished officer—In his letter of January 17th 1814, he says :—

"The honor of my king, the defence of my country, engaged in a just and unprovoked war, added to the glory of the British flag, is all I have in view."

The "honour of his king and country" would not be much advanced by having those *affairs of state* settled in the cabin of the *Statira*, by Capt. *Hassard Stackpole*, which belong to the *ministers* of his Majesty at *St. James*.

The commander of the frigate *Statira*, (if *men* and *things* have any analogy) would have been more appropriately located in the British brig *Swaggerer*, 16 guns, (see preceding Navy List.)—To be excused for a little pedantry, "*Statira*" signifies a *suspension of wrath*, and the meaning of "*Swaggerer*" is, like the old Almanacs—"familiar to the meanest capacity."

Comm. Decatur thus elegantly and pointedly concludes his letter of January 19th :—

"Whether the war we are engaged in be just or unprovoked on the part of Great Britain, as Capt. Stackpole has been pleased to suggest, is considered by us as a question exclusively with the civilians, and I am perfectly ready to admit both my incompetence and unwillingness to confront Capt. Stackpole in its discussion. I am Sir, with the highest consideration and respect, (Signed) STEPHEN DECATUR.

*To Comm. Sir Thomas Masterman Hardy, Bart. &c.*"

Comm. Hardy *finishes* the correspondence upon this subject in these terms :—

"I beg to assure you, Sir, I shall hail with pleasure the return of an amicable adjustment of the differences between the two nations, and have the honor to be, &c.

(Signed) THOS. MASTERMAN HARDY.

*To Comm. Stephen Decatur, &c. &c &c. N. London.*"

It really excites astonishment that two officers like Sir T. M. Hardy and Capt. H. Stackpole engaged for the same "king and country" should hold language so diametrically opposite—but—"who shall decide when doctors disagree."

It will be recollected that the sentiment given by Comm. Decatur at the dinner furnished his crew at New York was—'FREE TRADE, AND NO IMPRESSMENT.' To ensure the one, and prevent the other, were the great causes for which he was then, and always had been contending, both with Christians and Mahometans, for *Mahometan slavery* is not much to be preferred to *Christian impressment*. He was emphatically "The Sailor's Friend," and would exert every nerve to relieve them from distress, or restore them from bondage.

In April 1813, a *father* came to New London to rescue a *son* from bondage. It was an aged man by the name of *Alfred Carpenter*, of Norwich, (Conn.) If there can be any thing like good fortune in bondage, it was so for *John Carpenter* that he had been in a British ship five years with Sir T. M. Hardy, or others like him. A flag of truce was immediately dispatched to the *Ramilies*, with the father. He was courteously re-

ceived on board. Sir Thomas witnessed the embrace of the father and son, with the rapture of a benignant heart—immediately discharged the worthy and grateful seaman who had become a favourite, and gave him the necessary documents to obtain $2300 as *wages* and *prize-money*. Let the language of this magnanimous enemy speak his eulogy.

"H. M. SHIP RAMILIES.

*Off Block Island, April* 29, 1813.

"Sir—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of yesterday's date, and in reply I beg leave to say, that it is far from the wish of the commander in chief on this station, to keep any subject belonging to the United States, on board any of our ships of war. I have therefore sent by the bearer of this, John Carpenter; and if I thought there was another citizen of the United States on board the ship I have the honor to command, he should be sent by the same conveyance. I have directed the Orpheus to land all the prisoners she has on board, by getting proper receipts for them, and if the government of America do not think proper to send back the few men who have unfortunately fallen into their hands, I shall acquit myself of having done every thing in my power to lessen the hardships attached to the fortune of war; and shall, (though with much reluctance) in future be under the necessity of sending all the prisoners to Halifax or Bermuda. I have sent by the flag of truce Capt. Hudson, who was captured by the Ramilies a few days ago; may I beg of you to send a receipt for him, with the other prisoners?

I have the honour to be, yours most faithfully,

T. M. HARDY.

*To James Stewart, esq. agent for British prisoners, &c.*"

In March, 1814, Capt. Thomas B. Capel became commander of the British Squadron off New-London, in the *La Hogue*, 74. Comm. Decatur discovered that Capt. Stackpole had an American seaman, impressed in August 1803, and that he had been in the Statira six years. His name was *Hiram Thayer*, of Greenwich, (Mass.) Comm. Decatur dispatched Lieut. Hamilton with a flag to demand his discharge. Stackpole refused to discharge him, although the evidence of his nativity was as clear as that of the Prince Regent, under whom he served. The father of Thayer arrived at New-London in search for his lost son.

I cannot deny myself nor the reader the pleasure and the indignation of inserting an extract of Comm. Decatur's letter to the Secretary of the Navy, and Capt. Capel's to him upon this subject. Pleasure, to discover the goodness of the Commodore's heart, and Capt. Capel's urbanity—indignation at the diabolical wickedness of the gasconading Stackpole towards unresisting wretchedness. Let official documents tell the rest.

EXTRACT.

*U. S. S. United States, N. London, March 8th*, 1814.

SIR—John Thayer, the father of Hiram, assures me that the certificate of the selectmen, the town clerk, and the minister of Greenwich, were forwarded some time ago to Mr. Mitchell, the resident agent for American prisoners of war at Halifax, but does not know the reason why he was not discharged then.

The *son* has written to the *father*, and informed him, that on his representing to Capt. Stackpole that he was

an American citizen and would not fight against his country, that Capt. Stackpole told him "*if they fell in with an American man of war, and he did not do his duty, he should be tied to the mast and shot at like a dog!!*"

On Monday the 14th inst. John Thayer requested me to allow him a flag to go off to the enemy, and ask the release of his son. This I granted at once, and addressed a note to Capt. Capel, stating that I felt persuaded that the application of the father, furnished as he was with conclusive evidence of the *nativity* and the *identity* of the son, would induce an immediate order for his discharge. The reply is enclosed. *The son descried his father at a distance in the boat, and told the 1st lieutenant of the Statira that it was his father; and I understond the feelings manifested by the old man, on receiving the hand of his son, proved beyond all other evidence the property he had in him.* There was not a doubt left on the mind of a single British officer, of Hiram Thayer's being an American citizen—and yet he is *detained, not as a prisoner of war, but compelled, under the most cruel threats, to serve the enemies of his country.*

Thayer has so recommended himself by his sobriety, industry, and seamanship, as to be appointed a boatswain's mate, and is now serving in that capacity in the Statira—and he says there is due to him from the British government about 250*l.* sterling. He has also assured his father, that he has always refused to receive any bounty or advance, lest it might afford some pretext for denying him his discharge whenever a proper application should be made for it.

I am, Sir, &c.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

CAPTAIN CAPEL'S LETTER, ENCLOSED.

*H. B. M. Ship La Hogue, off*
*N. London, 14th March, 1814.*

Sir—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter, together with the certificates of exchange and discharge from parole, forwarded to you at the request of Col. Barclay the commissary-general of British prisoners of war; and I beg to return you my thanks for your polite attention.

I regret that it is not in my power to comply with your request, in ordering the son of Mr. John Thayer to be discharged from H. M. ship Statira, but I will forward your application to the commander in chief by the earliest opportunity, and I have no doubt he will order his immediate discharge.* I am sir, &c.

THOMAS B. CAPEL, Capt.
Commanding H. B. M. Squadron off N. London.

*To Comm. Decatur, Com. U. S. Squadron N. London.*

It is with delight, wholly inexpressible that such instances of humanity and philanthrophy are recorded. They serve for a time to make—"Grim visag'd war to smooth its wrinkled front," and to afford some refutation of the melancholy and pathetic exclamation of another of the poets of nature—

> "*Man's* inhumanity to *man*,
> Makes countless thousands mourn."

Should the examples of such officers as the noble DECATUR, and the no less noble HARDY, find imitation with all the officers of the American Republic and the

* Thayer was afterwards discharged.

British Empire, the time *might* come, when the Eagle and the Lion as well as the Lion and the Lamb would lie down together—and the sound of the Lute would be heard where the Clarion of war resounds.—It is worse than futile to expatiate upon the hackneyed idea that Americans and Englishmen have one common origin and *ought* to be friends. Let the British parliament learn from the "Lords Spiritual" who carry the "sanctity of their lawn" into its senate, and mingle it with "the pure ermine of justice" that adorns its "Lords Temporal" that harmony is not to be obtained by insolence and injustice*—and that a race of men like Americans, when injured will always obtain redress—and that Englishmen, when invading this sacred right, will always be compelled to submit.

While Comm. Decatur, was thus cut off from displaying his skill and valour upon a more extended theatre, the reader has been furnished with a few, out of the numerous instances of his active attention to every thing relating to the navy and to seamen, that came within his immediate observation. This tended in a degree to dissipate the languor which inaction will produce in the most active spirit.

The summer and autumn of 1814, presented to the view of Americans, many objects calculated to excite their deepest solicitude, and to call forth their highest energies. The fleets and armies of the "Allied Sovereigns" of Europe, in the van of which, our enemy

* The great Lord *Erskine*, in July, 1820, thus addressed the Peers of England:—"Remember to be *just*;---we stood above all other countries in our character for justice and equity, let us be careful not to forfeit that character."

went on conquering and to conquer, had restored every "legitimate sovereign" that could be found, and a sullen peace followed in Europe. The British ministry had disgorged their *unoccupied* troops upon our northern borders, with some of their best generals; and Comm. DOWNIE, one of their distinguished *naval* commanders, had a decided superiority of force to Comm. MACDONOUGH. The command of Lake Champlain, at this momentous crisis, was of more importance, perhaps, than that of any other of the interiour waters upon the continent of America. The hopes of the Northern and Middle states were fixed upon the gallant Macdonough, and their fears were excited from his inferiority of force. No one could participate more deeply in those feelings than Comm. Decatur, who was precluded from participating in the danger of his admired friend. *Decatur* and *Macdonough* had gone hand in hand in the great Mediterranean school, and in the desperate conflicts with the Tripolitans. The latter, then in a minor station, had followed the former in defending against the attacks of Syracusans with their daggers and stilettoes—the second that gained the deck of the *Philadelphia* after him, and valiantly succoured him in conquering the host of Turks, and destroying the frigate—and, to complete the climax of unsurpassed deeds of "noble daring," he was his main support in that unequalled contest with the Tripolitan Gunboats in avenging the death of Lieut. Decatur.

After this rapid sketch, I leave it for the reader to judge what must have been the rapture and exultation of Comm. Decatur, when the splendid and glorious victory of *September 11th*, 1814, was announced! Had

he gained the victory himself, his joy would not have been exceeded. It was not only that his admired friend and former associate had added to the laurels he had previously won, but that one of the most important sections of the Republic was saved from the depredations of such a Vandal foe as had devastated the western frontier—the borders of the Chesapeake—and the Metropolis.

This was one of the hardest fought battles and important victories during the war, as the enemy knew the immense consequences a victory would have been to themselves; and the slaughter amongst them was dreadful. Comm. Macdonough's fleet was at anchor in Plattsburgh bay, and the immense British army as confidently expected to witness a sudden victory over him as commander in chief, as the hosts of Tripolitans did, when he was a Midshipman under Comm. Decatur. The disappointment of both was equal; and they fled with almost equal precipitation when they heard the roar of American cannon, and witnessed the destructive effect of the unequalled gunnery of American seamen. The admirable order in which Comm. Macdonough had arranged his fleet, has ever been spoken of, as evincing the utmost nautical skill, and naval science. His ship, the *Saratoga*, for a considerable time bore nearly the whole weight of the enemy's fire. Her starboard side had nearly every gun dismounted. Had he at this period, struck his flag to a force so much superior, not even a whisper of censure would have been heard; but it was at this portentous moment, that the character of MACDONOUGH developed itself. With perfect self possession, he *winded* his ship—brought a fresh

broad-side on Comm. Downie's ship—compelled her to strike her flag—then sprang a broadside upon another ship—compelled her to strike also, and the victory was obtained. This faint sketch is only given to carry along with the memoirs of Comm. Decatur the greater achievements of our Navy; and more particularly, those of his associates in the *Mediterranean*. He had previously enjoyed the satisfaction of congratulating many of them for their skill, valour, and victories over a powerful Christian enemy, as he once saw them assist in compelling Mahometans to bow. His joy was enhanced when he embraced his gallant friend MACDONOUGH as one of the "conquering heroes."

# CHAPTER XIV.

Comm. Deeatur dismantles the frigates *United States* and *Macedonian*—Achievements of the Essex, Capt. Porter—Expedition to the East Indies resolved upon by the Navy Department—The Squadron for that service—Comm. Decatur designated as commander of it—Sails in the frigate *President*, encounters and beats the frigate *Endymion*, and surrenders to the *whole* British Squadron—His official account of the action—Additional particulars—Falsehoods of an English editor, and the consequences of them—The *remainder* of Comm. Decatur's Squadron, Hornet and Peacock.

Comm. Decatur remained at New-London with his squadron through that part of the season of 1814, during which there was any reasonable hope that he might escape the British blockading force, and put to sea with his ships. When the season arrived which precluded all hopes of escaping, he moved the frigates United States and Macedonian to the head of navigation in the river Thames, for ships of heavy burthen, and dismantled them. The Sloop of War Hornet, he ordered to remain at her station as a guard-ship.

At the commencement of the year 1815, the Navy Department determined to make an attempt to send a squadron to the East-Indies, to protect American commerce in those seas, and to annoy the enemy in that region. It was well known what the gallant and determined Capt. Porter had accomplished in a single frigate, the little Essex, in another quarter. The history of naval enterprise and perseverance does not afford a parallel to that which he accomplished. He literally

swept British commerce from an immense ocean. His little frigate, in her eccentric course, spread as much consternation amongst British merchants, as the comet once did amongst timid women, and men who think and act like timid women. No human calculation could determine where the Essex would *strike*, or what she would *burn*. The Lords-Commissioners of the whole Admiralty of Britain dispatched ship after ship, and squadron after squadron—the "north gave up, and the south kept not back"—almost every thing of British that could float, was dispatched to catch the little Essex. She had taken from British purses *two million dollars*, a sum sufficient to build *six* 74 *gun ships*, and to capture her cost the treasury of England *five million dollars*—of course sufficient to build *fifteen* 74 *gun ships*. But while enjoying a short respite from her labours, under the supposed protection of a *neutral port*, a British squadron under Comm. *Hillyer*, after being all but conquered himself, took the little Essex, in a state so riddled and battered by the gallant and desperate defence she made, that it is doubtful, whether the *same* Essex is now ranked in the List of the Royal Navy. As she was taken in open violation of the *Law of Nations*, in a neutral port, so her gallant commander, after his enemies had violated the *law of honour*, returned to his country and his duty, without being *exchanged* for a Captain of the British Navy.*

However unpropitious the prospect might be of an American ship or squadron escaping the enemy's ships which lined our coast, and choked our sounds, bays,

* Vide Comm. Porter's official report.

and harbours, the Navy Department resolved to send every armed ship to sea, that could reach it by escaping the enemy, or fighting a passage through them. Our Naval officers reversed the maxim of the British knight who declared that—" It was better to die with *rust*, than to be *scoured* to death with perpetual motion."* They felt as impatient out of water as the leviathan, which majestically maintains his dominion in the mighty deep.

The squadron designed for the important cruise to the East-Indies and the commander, will be directly mentioned. The Hornet was still at New-London under the command of Capt. Biddle. He was ordered, if possible, to escape from the harbour of New-London *by* the blockading squadron there, and reach New-York *through* the squadron off the Hook, consisting of a number of frigates, sloops of war and a razee. Capt. Biddle had a duty of extreme difficulty to perform in reaching the harbour of New-York; but with the most admirable skill, upon the night of the 18th November, he eluded the vigilant watch of the British squadron at New-London,—passed through that off New-York, and joined the other ships of the American sqnadron. This achievement alone entitles Capt. Biddle to an high rank amongst accomplished navigators.

The ships and officers of this squadron consisted of the frigate *President*, Comm. Decatur—Sloops of war, *Hornet*, Capt. Biddle—*Peacock*, (new) Capt. Warrington, and *Tom Bowline*, (storeship,) Lieut. Hoffman.† A

* Vide Shakespeare's Henry IV.

† As this is the first time the name of Lieut. *B. V. Hoffman* has occurred in these sketches, it may gratify the reader to learn

little embarrassment arose at the Navy Department in consequence of designating Comm. Decatur as commander of the *President*. Comm. Rodgers had recently returned from a cruise in that ship, and, as she needed repairs, the command of the *Gurriere*, nearly ready for sea, was offered to him. He preferred retaining the command of the *President*, which had been offered to Comm. Decatur. Thus circumstanced, Comm. Rodgers, with his characteristic magnanimity, gave the choice of ships to Comm. Decatur, who took the President.

The squadron was fitted for sea by the 14th January. Comm. Decatur, fully aware that if he got to sea, he must go through a host of enemy's ships, cautiously determined to sail singly himself, and designated the

that he was a Lieutenant on board the Constitution, Capt. Stewart, in the distinguished action on the 20th February, 1815, between that ship and the *two* ships of war *Cyane* and *Levant*. The year before, the Cyane engaged a French 44 gun frigate and *fought* her until a British 74 came up and *took* her—and but a short period before that, she engaged a *frigate*, 14 *gun brig* and *five gun-boats*, and beat them off, for which the commander *deservedly* received the honours of knighthood---yet, with the assistance of the Levant, of 21 guns, she and her consort both struck to the *Constitution*, most emphatically called "*Old Iron-Sides*." Lieut. *Hoffman* was dispatched with the *Cyane* to America---through all the enemy's ships arrived at New-York, and elegantly described the action in his letter to the Secretary of the Navy. Capt. Stewart says in *his* official letter—"*He gallantly supported the reputation of an American seaman.*" Such a commendation, from such an officer as Capt. Stewart, rendered Lieut. Hoffman a fit associate for Comm. Decatur. He was also an active officer in the Constitution, in the actions with the Gurriere and Java.

island of Tristun d'Acunha* as the place of rendezvous for the squadron.

Upon the evening of the 14th January, 1815, Comm. Decatur and his officers took leave of the gallant and accomplished officers of the remaining ships of his squadron—some of them, alas! for the last time, weighed anchor in the noble frigate President, and, with his pilot, attempted to put to sea.† The official account of the occurrences that followed, are detailed by Comm. Decatur in his letter to the Secretary of the Navy, in a style so far surpassing any other description that could be given, that it is here offered to the admiration of the reader.

*H. B. M. Ship Endymion,*
*At Sea, Jan.* 18, 1815.

Sir—The painful duty of detailing to you the particular causes which preceded and led to the capture of the late United States frigate President, by a squadron of his Britannic majesty's ships (as per margin) has devolved upon me. In my communication of the 14th, I made known to you my intention of proceeding to sea that evening. Owing to some mistake of the pilots,

* For an interesting and elegant account of this island, see Analectic Magazine,

† When Comm. Decatur dismantled the frigate United States, and was appointed to the command of this squadron, his officers and crew urgently hoped that they might follow their beloved commander to any ship and through every danger. They remained together. It will be remembered that the gallant and lamented LAWRENCE was removed from the noble *Constitution* and his *crew, with whom he had become familiar*, to the ill-starred *Chesapeake* and her *crew to whom he was almost an entire stranger* The result is too well known!

the ship in going out, grounded on the bar, where she continued to strike heavily for an hour and a half. Although she had broken several of her rudder-braces, and had received such other material injury as to render her return into port desirable, I was unable to do so from the strong westerly wind which was then blowing. It being now high water, it became necessary to force her over the bar before the tide fell; in this we succeeded by 10 o'clock, when we shaped our course along the shore of Long Island for 50 miles, and then steered S. E. by E. At 5 o'clock, three ships were discovered ahead; we immediately hauled up the ship and passed 2 miles to the northward of them. At daylight, we discovered four ships in chase, one on each quarter and two astern, the leading ship of the enemy, a razee—she commenced a fire upon us, but without effect. At meridian, the wind became light and baffling, we had increased our distance from the razee, but the next ship astern, which was also a large ship, had gained and continued to gain upon us considerably; we immediately occupied all hands to lighten ship, by starting water, cutting the anchors, throwing overboard provisions, cables, spare spars, boats, and every article that could be got at, keeping the sails wet from the royals down. At 3, we had the wind quite light; the enemy who had now been joined by a brig, had a strong breeze and were coming up with us rapidly. The Endymion (mounting 50 guns, 24 pounders on the main deck) had now approached us within gun-shot, and had commenced a fire with her bow guns, which we returned from our stern. At 5 o'clock, she had obtained a position on our starboard quarter, within half point

blank shot, on which neither our stern nor quarter guns would bear; we were now steering E. by N. the wind N. W. I remained with her in this position for half an hour, in the hope that she would close with us on our broadside, in which case I had prepared my crew to board, but from his continuing to yaw his ship to maintain his position, it became evident that to close was not his intention. Every fire now cut some of our sails or rigging. To have continued our course under these circumstances, would have been placing it in his power to cripple us, without being subject to injury himself, and to have hauled up more to the northward to bring our stern guns to bear, would have exposed us to his raking fire. It was now dusk, when I determined to alter my course S. for the purpose of bringing the enemy abeam, and although their ships astern were drawing up fast, I felt satisfied I should be enabled to throw him our of the combat before they could come up, and was not without hopes, if the night proved dark, (of which there was every appearance) that I might still be enabled to effect my escape. Our opponent kept off at the same instant we did, and commenced at the same time. We continued engaged steering south with steering sails set two hours and a half, when we completely succeeded in dismantling her. Previously to her dropping entirely out of the action, there were intervals of minutes, when the ships were broadside and broadside, in which she did not fire a gun. At this period (half past 8 o'clock) although dark, the other ships of the squadron were in sight and almost within gun-shot. We were of course compelled to abandon her. In resuming our former course for the purpose

of avoiding the squadron, we were compelled to present our stern to our antagonist—but such was his state, though we were thus exposed and within range of his guns for half an hour, that he did not avail himself of this favourable opportunity of raking us. We continued this course until 11 o'clock, when two fresh ships of the enemy (the Pomona and Tenedos) had come up. The Pomona had opened her fire on the larboard bow, within musket-shot; the other about two cables' length astern, taking a raking position on our quarter; and the rest (with the exception of the Endymion) within gun-shot. Thus situated, with about one fifth of my crew killed and wounded, my ship crippled, and a more than four-fold force opposed to me, without a chance of escape left, I deemed it my duty to surrender.

It is with emotions of pride I bear testimony to the gallantry and steadiness of every officer and man I had the honour to command on this occasion, and I feel satisfied that the fact of their beating a force equal to themselves, in the presence, and almost under the guns of so vastly a superior force, when too, it was almost self-evident, that whatever their exertions might be, they must ultimately be captured, will be taken as evidence of what they would have performed, had the force opposed to them been in any degree equal.

It is with extreme pain I have to inform you that Lieutenants Babbit, Hamilton and Howell, fell in the action. They have left no officers of superior merit behind them.

If, Sir, the issue of this affair had been fortunate, I should have felt it my duty to have recommended to

your attention Lieutenants Shubrick and Gallagher. They maintained through the day the reputation they had acquired in former actions.

Lieut. Twiggs, of the marines, displayed great zeal; his men were well supplied and their fire incomparable, so long as the enemy continued within musket range.

Midshipman Randolph, who had charge of the forecastle division, managed it to my entire satisfaction.

From Mr. Robinson, who was serving as a volunteer, I received essential aid, particularly after I was deprived of the services of the master, and the severe loss I had sustained in my officers on the quarter deck.

Of our loss in killed and wounded, I am unable at present to give you a correct statement; the attention of the surgeon being so entirely occupied with the wounded, that he was unable to make out a correct return when I left the President, nor shall I be able to make it until our arrival into port, we having parted company with the squadron yesterday. The enclosed list, with the exception I fear of its being short of the number, will be found correct.

For twenty-four hours after the action it was nearly calm, and the squadron were occupied in repairing the crippled ships. Such of the crew of the President as were not badly wounded, were put on board the different ships; myself and part of my crew were put on board this ship. On the 17th we had a gale from the eastward, when this ship lost her bowsprit, fore and mainmast and mizen topmast, all of which were badly wounded, and was in consequence of her disabled condition, obliged to throw overboard all her upper deck guns; her loss in killed and wounded must have been

very great. I have not been able to ascertain the extent. Ten were buried after I came on board, (36 hours after the action;) the badly wounded, such as are obliged to keep their cots, occupy the starboard side of the gun-deck from the cabin-bulk-head to the main-mast. From the crippled state of the President's spars, I feel satisfied she could not have saved her masts, and I feel serious apprehensions for the safety of our wounded left on board.

It is due to Capt. Hope to state that every attention has been paid by him to myself and officers that have been placed on board his ship, that delicacy and humanity could dictate. I have the honour, &c.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

*Hon. B. W. Crowninshield, Secretary of the Navy.*

The loss on board the frigate President, was 25 killed, and 60 wounded.

It is a little singular that Comm. Decatur should so much have underrated the disaster which, in the estimation of the most distinguished naval characters, occasioned the ultimate loss of the frigate President. Instead of the President remaining on the bar at New-York "an hour and an half" to those who could not be mistaken, it was certain she remained there, violently beating and thumping, in a strong westerly gale for more than *two hours*, without any one's fault; and, being heavily laden, for a very long cruise, serious fears were entertained that she would go to pieces. And here one of those misfortunes which no sagacity could foresee—no prudence prevent—and no skill avert, and which renders science, presence of mind, and fortitude equally

unavailing, happened to the skillful, the cool, and dauntless DECATUR. His ship, rendered more fit for the dock than the ocean, was propelled forth by an irresistible wind, and, although navigated with superior skill, was driven into the midst of a foe more than four times her force,* in the night season. She still would sail; and the object of the commander was, to call into operation those masterly manœuverings which had so often enabled American ships to *escape* from an overwhelming superiority of force, and which entitles our naval officers to applause, little less than that which they have received for *conquering* a superior force.

To effect an *escape* from the enemy's squadron which was in chase of the President, was the sole object of Comm. Decatur; and if to engage and conquer the leading ship of the enemy, of equal force with his own, would contribute to *that* object, it certainly was justifiable to make the attempt, although his prize might afterwards be recaptured, and his own ship taken. He did make the attempt and the *Endymion* was effectually conquered—her guns were silenced,—and she omitted to fire upon the President, when the best raking position was afforded her; while the frigate President, carrying royal studding-sails and near effecting an escape, was again attacked by the *Pomona* and *Tenedos*, and the *Majestic* and *Despatch* were within gun-shot. The rigging of the President being further injured by this fresh attack;—finding resistance vain, and escape impossible, for the first, and only time in his life,

*The British squadron consisted of the *Majestic*, (*razee* or 74,) *Endymion*, 50—*Pomone*, 38—*Tenedos*, 38---*Despatch*, 18.

Comm. Decatur lowered his flag. He had gained a decisive victory; and, if the common result of victory had followed, the American banner would now wave upon the noble ship *Endymion*, and her name would appear in the List of the American Navy.

Comm. Decatur was ready to deliver his sword to that officer of the British squadron who had a right to receive it. The gallant Capt. Hope of the *Endymion*, would not have asked it had he been in the squadron, for he did not join it until *six hours* after the action. Comm. Decatur surrendered his ship, and surrendered it only to the *whole squadron*, and to the Commander in Chief only would he offer it. It was delivered to Capt. Hays of the *Majestic*, (senior officer) upon *his* quarter-deck, who, with that politeness, with which one brave man always demeans himself toward another, *immediately* returned it to him who had always so nobly used it. He did not *forget* to return Comm. Decatur his sword for *seven days*, as Comm. Hillyer did that of the gallant Capt. Porter, and *then* to say, "it is in my servant's possession, until the master may please to call for it."

A fact which does not appear in Comm. Decatur's official letter of 18th January ought to be mentioned. Capt. *Hope* had on board the *Endymion* during the action, 1 Lieutenant, 1 Master's-mate, and 50 seamen from the *Saturn*, in addition to his own crew—and yet he was beaten.

Why Comm. Decatur, should not have mentioned his own wound, can be accounted for only from that principle of modesty, which restrains a brave man from speaking of himself.

Upon Comm. Decatur's arrival at Bermuda, the utmost attention was paid to him by the civil, naval, and military authorities of the place. His well-established character had reached that place before he appeared there upon his parole of honour.

But although Comm. Decatur had long been familiar with the thunders of batteries and castles upon land, and the roaring of cannon upon the ocean, he here had to encounter a species of force with which he was yet to be made acquainted—" *The Artillery of the Press*"—A power which, like Mercury, in the hands of science and skill, is an invaluable blessing; but in those of ignorance, and sullen stupidity, a dangerous and troublesome evil. The editor of the Bermuda *Royal Gazette*, (not however until he felt himself *secure* by the return of Comm. Decatur to America) published in his paper an outrageous falsehood, calculated to cast a shade upon the brilliant fame of the Commodore. Amongst other falsehoods he stated that " *The President struck to the Endymion, and that after she struck, Comm. Decatur concealed* 68 *men in her hold to rise upon the prize crew!*" Capt. *Hope*, of the *Endymion*, disclaimed all knowledge of the article, until he saw it in the Gazette, and expressly contradicted it. The Editor still persisted; and Mr. *R. B. Randolph*, one of the Midshipmen of the President under Comm. Decatur, and who still remained in the island, chastised the Editor in the *King's Square* (to use the Midshipman's language) " in the most ample and satisfactory manner." Nor was this all. The governour of the Island declared, officially that—" In justice to himself—to Capt. Hope, and to the British nation; and in common justice to

Comm. Decatur, who is not present to defend himself" —the scurrilous publication must be retracted, or he would no longer continue to be "*his majesty's printer.*" —Probably the Editor who took his *first degree* from Mr. Randolph upon his back, and choosing not to be *advanced* any farther into the *arcanum* of discipline, and to secure his bread from the crown, retracted with submission as mean, as his slander was impudent.

It was said that Capt. *Carden* received thanks in England for his defence of the *Macedonian*. He deserved them as much as Capt. *Broke* did a *knighthood* for taking the Chesapeake. The *opinion* of the Court of Inquiry concerning the *loss of the frigate President*, is as highly commendatory to Comm. Decatur as the *vote of thanks* for *capturing the Macedonian*. I regret that its length forbids an insertion entire. A few extracts will be given.—"The primary cause of the loss of the *President* was her running upon the bar as she was leaving this port."—"Her hogged and twisted appearance after she arrived at Bermuda, must have been the effect of that unfortunate accident."—"The striking of the President on the bar, cannot be imputed to the fault of any officer who was attached to her." As to effecting an escape, the Court say—"No means, in our opinion, were so likely to be attended with success, as those which were adopted by Comm. Decatur." As to the action with the *Endymion*, it is said—"*In this unequal conflict, the enemy gained a ship, but the victory was ours.*" In regard to the proposition to board the enemy, "and the manner in which the proposition was received by his gallant crew," the Court, with an elegance worthy of the exalted subject, say—"*Such a de-*

*sign, at such a time, could only be conceived by a soul without fear, and approved, with enthusiastic cheering, by men regardless of danger.*" And, finally, "That his conduct, and the conduct of his officers and crew, were highly honourable to them, and to the American Navy, and *deserve the warmest gratitude of their country.*"

The Secretary of the Navy, after bestowing the most flattering commendations upon Comm. Decatur, says—"It would have been equally unjust to your merit, as well as to my sentiments, and feelings, to have passed over this investigation with a *formal* approbation."

The writer has been thus minute, and he fears tedious, in detailing the particulars of the loss of the frigate President. To give an account of a victory is much easier, than to assign a reason for a disaster—a *defeat* we cannot with propriety denominate the loss of the President. In common with his countrymen, the writer participated in the temporary gloom which pervaded the country, when it was announced—"The frigate President is captured by the British from Comm. Decatur!" It was almost simultaneous with the annunciation of peace between the Republic and Britain; and the joy excited by the one, was essentially dampened by the other. But no sooner was the occurrence understood, than a new cause for triumph was afforded for our naval victories, and every one was ready to exclaim, in the language of the Court of Inquiry who investigated the subject—"THE ENEMY GAINED A SHIP, BUT THE VICTORY WAS OURS."

The reader will naturally enquire what became of

the *Hornet*, Capt. *Biddle*, and *Peacock*, Capt. *Warrington*, which belonged to Comm. Decatur's Squadron. It would be a delightful employ, to give a minute account of these noble Sloops of War and their gallant commanders while in this squadron. A brief one will be attempted.

Pursuant to Comm. Decatur's orders, they proceeded unmolested to the Island of *Tristun de Acunha*, as the place of rendezvous appointed by him. The Hornet separated from the Peacock in a chase, two days out. Upon 23d March, 1815, as Capt Biddle was about to anchor the Hornet at the north end of Tristun de Acunha, he fell in with one of the largest armed, and best fitted Brigs in the British navy, and commanded by one of the most distinguished of the younger class of British naval officers. It was the *Penguin*, Capt. *Dickinson*, mounting 20 guns. Admiral Tyler loaned him 12 men from the *Medway*, 74,—and he was directed particularly to cruise for the *Young Wasp*, much superior in her armament to the *Hornet*. The little Hornet, in the hands of Capt. Biddle, nobly supported the fame she acquired in the hands of the heroic and lamented Capt. Lawrence.

Capt. Biddle, in his letter to his beloved commander, Comm. Decatur, of the 25th March, says—"*From the firing of the first gun, to the last time the enemy cried out he had surrendered, was exactly twenty-two minutes.*" *After* surrendering the *first* time, Capt. Biddle received a dangerous wound in his neck!! *Twenty* men were killed or died of wounds in the Penguin, and *thirty-five* wounded. In the Hornet 1 killed, 9 wounded. The Penguin was so completely riddled in her hull, and her

rigging so effectually demolished, that Capt. Biddle scuttled and sunk her—the second ship of superior force, that the Hornet had sent to the bottom.

Toward the close of the action, the gallant Capt. Dickinson exclaimed to his 1st Lieut. *Mc'Donald*—"The fellows are giving it to us like hell—we must get on board"—and in a few minutes after, fell dead upon his deck, with a terrible shot.—Capt. Biddle asked Mc'Donald why he did not board the Hornet? He answered—"He did try—but found the men rather backward—and so you know we concluded to give it up."

The Peacock, Capt. Warrington, joined the Hornet, a few days after this brilliant victory,—remained at *Tristun de Acunha*, according to Comm. Decatur's instructions; and then sailed for the East-Indies.—Upon the 27th and 28th April, chased a strange sail, supposed to be an Indiaman, until she was discovered to be a ship of the line; which, upon the 29th hoisted English colours—shewed a rear Admiral's flag, and commenced firing upon the *Hornet*—The chase lasted 42 hours! and to give the expressive language of Capt. Biddle in his letter to Comm. Decatur of June 10th, 1815—"It was with the most painful reluctance, and upon the fullest conviction, that it was indispensible, in order to prevent a greater misfortune, that I could bring my mind to consent to part with my *guns*." One of Capt. Biddle's accomplished officers remarks, after describing the imminent danger they were in, and their fortunate escape—"Never has there been so evident an interposition of the goodness of a divine Father—my heart with gratitude, acknowledges his supreme power and goodness." A *heart* thus grateful to a Divine

Father, would raise a fearless hand in fighting his enemy. When every hope of escape had vanished, and the shot was whistling through the Hornet, the exhausted Capt. Biddle mustered his worn-out officers and crew—thanked them for their unparalleled exertions, and told them they might soon expect to be captured. "Not a dry eye" (continues the officer) "was to be seen at the mention of *capture*. The rugged hearts of the sailors, like ice before the sun, wept in unison with their brave commander."

Upon the arrival of the Hornet at *St. Salvador* upon the 9th June, without *anchor*, *cable*, or *boat*, and but *one gun*, Capt. Biddle received news of *Peace*. The *Hornet* returned safe to America; and the veteran DECATUR, welcomed the gallant BIDDLE, with one of the *remainder* of his squadron*—a squadron never surpassed either in conquering an *equal*, or in escaping an overwhelming *superior* force. Whenever a British naval officer looks with complacency upon the frigate *President* at *Spithead*, let him remember the shattered *Endymion*,—the sunken *Penguin*, and the mortified rear-admiral (name unknown) whose cannon could not sink, and whose skill could not capture the *Hornet* or *Peacock*. In regard to the *whole* of this *little* squadron, then we may again repeat :—

'THE ENEMY GAINED A SHIP—THE VICTORY WAS OURS.'

* The *Peacock* cruised *nine months*. A war against Algiers had been declared, prosecuted, and ended, *since* the Peacock sailed; and Comm. Decatur returned triumphantly from the Mediterranean, about the same time Capt. Warrington returned with the Peacock.

# CHAPTER XV.

Comm. Decatur returns from his *fourth* cruise—Reception—PEACE ratified—Scenes of domestic felicity—Depredations of Barbary powers—By whom instigated—Squadron to chastise and humble them—Comm. Decatur appointed to command the first Mediterranean Squadron in 1815—Victory over *Algerine* Admiral—Consternation of the Dey—Indemnifies Americans and concludes a Treaty of Peace—Comm. Decatur demands and receives indemnification from *Tunis* and *Tripoli* for British violations—Demands release of Christian captives—Restores them to Naples, and is honoured by the King—Surrenders squadron to Comm. Bainbridge, and returns to America—Comm. Bainbridge's respect to him.

Comm. Decatur, in his *fourth* cruise, had been absent from New-York, *fifty one* days, during which time he conquered a British frigate, equal to his force—almost escaped a British squadron four times his force—arrived in a British port—arranged his affairs with the British forces, and upon returning again to New-York found his beloved country enjoying a peace which he had so signally aided in rendering secure, and it is hoped as permanent as the fame he had acquired. He was welcomed into that patriotic city with no less ardour of attachment, and with no less admiration for his gallantry, than when he gladdened the eyes of the citizens with the sight of the *Macedonian*, on the 1st of January, 1813; and were not the repetition of *ceremonious* attentions calculated to "pall upon the senses," and splendid spectacles, like beauty made familiar, to "fade in the eye," they might well have again surrounded the

festive board, and displayed *another* transparency :—"THE PRESIDENT BEATING THE ENDYMION, Jan. 15th, 1815." But the exalted sentiment in the Declaration of AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE, in the *first* war with Britain, and which was rendered secure by the *second* war just closed, is :—

"ENEMIES IN WAR—IN PEACE, FRIENDS."

Could the noble DECATUR, and the no less noble HARDY have *now* met, they could cordially have reciprocated the sentiment expressed by the last, even when in sight of the first with a superior force—"I shall hail, with pleasure, the return of an amicable adjustment of the differences between the two nations."* These "differences," would have been "adjusted" in the cabin of Comm. Decatur's frigate, or Sir T. M. Hardy's 74, in twelve hours, had they been clothed with diplomatic powers. The formal exhibition of *credentials, interchange of powers, protocols, sine-qua-nons, ultimatums, et cetera, et cetera*, would soon have been "cleared for action," and they would have brought their minds to the subject in a style as noble as either of them would have carried their ships into combat.

Comm. Decatur was now in the enjoyment of every temporal felicity. Although in a degree worn by the "peltings of the pitiless storms" of war, created by the passion of men, and those of the elements by the winds of heaven, he had no mutilated limb to torture or deform him. From boyhood he had been in the thickest showers of the messengers of death, and the king of terrors had strode around him, and often encrimsoned

* Vide Chap. XIII.—Challenge, &c.

him with the blood of his foes ; but these dangers he had escaped almost unhurt, and might have said, with his admired friend Comm. Macdonough, after the carnage around him had ceased, and he untouched. "*There is a power above which determined the fate of man.*" It was not the destiny of Comm. Decatur to die by the hands of *foreign enemies.*

Although he had long been inured to the fatigues, the anxieties, the privations, and the ruggedness of naval warfare, and had reaped so largely of the conquest-wove wreaths of garlands, in *two** hemispheres, yet he had not lost his relish for the mild, and innocent, and fascinating charms of peace. Although he was as fearless and death-daring as Richard in war, he had, unlike him, other employments in peace than "To view his own shadow in the sun, and descant upon its deformities," or to "lay plots and form inductions" for the murder of his kinsmen or his companions. Although he was delighthd with, and imparted delight to public assemblies and splendid levees, yet it was in the bosom of his own family where his happiness was consummated—for there he found his *own heart,* and carried into it *the heart* he received for it. His kindred, by blood, had been farther diminished by the death of

* "The same chivalrous chief, who bore
Rich tributes once from Barb'ry's shore,*
As *Allah's* sons can tell—
But now a nobler trophy† shows,
Wrested from mightier, manlier foes,
Who fought so long---so well."

OCEAN---A NAVAL ODE.

* Tripoli, 1804. † Macedonian, 1812.

his venerated father, and perhaps by others. The death of this noble father must have severed one of the strong ligaments that bound his gallant son to this world. Could he have survived the war with *Britain*, as he did that of *Tripoli*, and have rejoiced with his countrymen in the augmented renown of his son, and the increased glory of the American Navy, he might well have exclaimed to his Creator—"Now let thy servant die in peace."

But these charming scenes, in which rapturous delight was mingled, with soothing melancholy, were of short duration with Comm. Decatur. He was again to be called into a contest which *might* be more sanguinary than even those through which *he* had passed. It was not merely with *one* of the Bardary powers—it was with *every one* of them who had preyed upon American commerce or citizens *themselves*, but who had permitted *Englishmen*, during the last war, to violate the law of nations in their neutral ports, by capturing American ships and seamen in them.

As these injuries from Barbarians were chiefly sustained during the war with Britain, and, as a belligerent, she possessed a right to do America all the harm she could, perhaps it will be deemed equally justifiable in that power to have let loose upon us the Savages of Africa, as well as those of America. That the ravages in the Mediterranean sea and ports upon Americans, by the Barbary powers, in 1813, 1814, and 1815, were *encouraged* or *caused* by Englishmen, is easily demonstrated, and will be very briefly attempted.

Tobias Lear, Esq. once the private Secretary and confidential friend of President Washington, had for

many years been American consul-general at the Barbary states. It will be recollected that he negociated the peace with Tripoli, while Comm. Decatur was lying before that place in the Constitution, and Congress. At the commencement of the war with Great Britain, Mr. Lear was American Consul-General at Algiers. After the declaration of war, the American ship *Alleghany* arrived at Algiers with stores, in fulfilment of our treaty with that power. The Dey refused to receive them—ordered Consul Lear and every American to leave the city in the Alleghany. The ship arrived at Gibraltar—was condemned, with her cargo—her crew sent to England as prisoners of war ; and Mr. Lear, although a *Consul-General*, was compelled to return to America by way of Cadiz. At about the same time, the Algerine fleet of 5 Frigates, 3 Corvettes, 2 Brigs, 1 Xebec, 1 Schooner, and several Gun-Boats and Row-Gallies, sailed from Algiers. At near the close of the year 1812, orders were given in *London*, for stores to equip the ALGERINE NAVY, to the amount of ONE HUNDRED SIXTY THOUSAND DOLLARS. A very short extract from Consul *Lear's* letter will be all the other reason that will here be given as to the cause of the war with Algiers. He says—" I had reason to think the conduct of the *Dey of Algiers*, toward the United States, was instigated by the British ; as it was universally acknowledged by the *public functionaries*, and others in Algiers, that the government of the United States had been remarkably faithful in the fulfilment of their treaty stipulations with the Dey and Regency of Algiers."

But however the war was occasioned, it will very briefly be shown how it was conducted and concluded.

Comm. Decatur, was once more designated to appear in the theatre of his early glory, as *Commander in Chief* of a squadron to *conquer* the enemy into peace, and then, as a *Negociator*, to agree upon the terms of it. His name had become as terrible to the enemies of America, upon the ocean, as that of Nelson once was to the enemies of Britain.

The ships and the commanders in the squadron, destined to the Mediterranean in 1815, were as follows—

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|---|---|---|
| Flag Ship, Gurriere, | 44 | Comm. Decatur, Capt. Lewis. |
| Frigate Macedonian, | 36 | Capt. Jones. |
| ,, ,, Constellation, | 36 | Capt. Gordon. |
| Sloop of War, Ontario, | 18 | Mast. Comdt. J. D. Elliot. |
| ,, ,, Epervier, | 18 | Lieut. Downs. |
| Schooner, Flambeau, | 12 | Lieut. J. B. Nicholson. |
| ,, ,, Spark, | 12 | Lieut. T. Gamble. |
| ,, ,, Spitfire, | 11 | Lieut. A. J. Dallas. |
| ,, ,, Torch, | 10 | Lieut. W. Chauncey. |

Comm. Decatur rendezvoused at New-York, with his squadron, as one instrument of negociation, and with *Instructions* from the President of the United States as another. He sailed from New-York, 20th May, 1815, and reached the bay of Gibraltar in *twenty-five* days, (14th June)—sailed round the harbour with his squadron, in elegant style, with his broad pendant, and all his flags flying, without coming to anchor. As he was passing round, an immense throng of British naval officers were critically viewing the American fleet. One of them asked an American gentleman present, to give the *names* of the different ships. With the utmost politeness, he pointed to the Commodore's, and said—"That, Sir, is the *Gurriere*"—Then

pointing to Capt. Jones'—" That, Sir, is the *Macedonian*"—Then at Lieut. Downs'—" That, Sir, is the *Epervier*"—and, proceeding, " The next, Sir, is—— " O damn the next" said they, and in chagrin walked off at hearing the names of *three* ships captured from their navy. Their informant might have given them *more* names of ships, captured from Britain, than the *whole* of Comm. Decatur's squadron.

* Comm. Decatur having learned that dispatches were instantly sent off to the Algerine fleet, announcing his arrival at Gibraltar, immediately passed the straits into the Mediterranean, in pursuit of it, fearing it would reach a " neutral port."

The celebrated *Hammida*, was the Algerine Admiral, and sailed in the frigate *Mazouda*. He had excited the unbounded admiration of the Dey, by his unceasing activity, and the terror of defenceless merchantmen by his diabolical rapacity. Upon June 17th, Comm. Decatur, in the Gurriere, had the good fortune to fall in with the Admiral's frigate which had separated from the fleet—gave him two broadsides—brought down the Turkish crescent—killed thirty of the crew, and amongst them the renowned Hammida; and took 406 prisoners. Upon the 19th, captured an Algerine Brig of 22 guns and sent her into Carthagena.

Correctly concluding the enemy's fleet had reached

* The *facts* from which the following brief sketch is made, were gathered from the official letters of Comm DECATUR, and W. SHALER, Esq. to Hon JAMES MONROE, Secretary of State ---from those of Comm. Decatur, to Hon. BENJAMIN W. CROWNINSHIELD, Secretary of the Navy,---and from publications, and communications, upon which the most perfect reliance is placed.

a neutral port, he shaped his course, with his prize, and prisoners for Algiers. He arrived there upon the 28th, and came to an anchor with his whole squadron.

Determining to know, forthwith, whether peace could be negociated upon the terms he and WILLIAM SHALER, Esq. (who was a joint negociator with him) had to propose, he immediately dispatched a letter from the President of the United States, to the Dey, to enable him to have a fair opportunity to negociate upon fair and equal terms, and that without the least delay or procrastination. Comm. Decatur could negociate at Algiers either way, and as rapidly as Lord Nelson once did at Copenhagen—but let not the comparison go farther. Decatur was prepared to make war upon, or peace with, a power which had wantonly invaded the rights of his country—Nelson ——— "but beshrew the sombre pencil."

Upon receipt of the President's letter, the Dey dispatched his Port-Captain (an officer high in rank) accompanied by the Swedish consul, on board the Gurriere, who were received with the utmost courtesy by Comm. Decatur and Mr. Shaler, who informed the Port-Captain that they were authorised, by the American government, to negociate a treaty, the basis of which must be, an unequivocal relinquishment of all annual tribute, or ransom for prisoners. The Port-Captain still had confidence in the marine force of the Dey, and in Admiral *Hammida*; and assured the Commodore that their squadron was safe in a neutral port. "*Not all of it*," answered Comm. Decatur. "*The frigate Mazouda, and a 22 gun Brig, are already captured, and your Admiral Hammida is killed.*" With a look of incredu-

lity, mingled with that contempt which a *Mahometan* is taught by his *religion* to feel towards *Christians*, and which he never relinquishes until *contempt* gives place to *fear*, he denied the fact. Hammida's Lieutenant, who was a prisoner in the Gurriere, was called in, who tremblingly acknowledged the truth of the assertion. The dismayed Port-Captain said he was not authorised to make a treaty ; and beseeched that hostilities might cease, until a treaty could be negociated on shore. Said Comm. Decatur : "*Hostilities will not cease until a treaty is made ; and a treaty will not be made any where but on board the Gurriere.*"

The Port-Captain, and the Swedish Consul went on shore. The next day, June 30th, the Port-Captain and Swedish Consul came out again to the Gurriere, with full powers to negociate. The articles of a treaty were presented to them, by the American Commissioners, which it was declared would not be varied in any *material* point. The Algerine commissioners insisted that property taken from Americans should not be restored, as it was dispersed into many hands. It was answered, "*As it was unjustly taken it must be restored or paid for.*" The relinquishment of tribute from America, was the most difficult point to settle ; as the relinquishment to that power might lead to a relinquishment to all others, and cause the Dey's destruction. It was said, even a little powder as annual tribute, might be satisfactory. "*If you insist upon receiving powder as tribute,*" said the Commodore, "*you must expect to receive* BALLS *with it.*"

The unyielding firmness of the American Commissioners—added to the force which they had to compel

a compliance with their reasonrble demands, induced the Dey to ratify the treaty the same day it was made, (June 30th, 1815.)

One of the Dey's courtiers, while this sudden negociation was going on, thus addressed the British Consul: —"You told us that the American Navy would be destroyed in *six months* by *you*, and *now* they make war upon *us* with *three* of *your own vessels* they have taken from you."

Thus was a very important treaty negociated in *forty-eight hours*, giving to the American government and citizens, privileges and immunities never before granted by a Barbary State to any Christian power. The treaty consists of twenty-two articles, and is too long for insertion in this volume. In consequence of obtaining just such a treaty as was demanded, the captured frigate was indignantly given up, to appease the lacerated feelings of the Dey, and to save him from the assassination of his own slaves. The brig was given up upon the release of the Spanish consul, and a Spanish merchant, in bondage in Algiers!

Comm. Decatur immediately dispatched Capt. *Lewis* in the Brig *Epervier*, to America with the treaty, and left Mr. Shaler at Algiers as American Consul-General to the Barbary States.

Comm. Decatur, having closed his concerns with *Omar, Dey of Algiers*, learned that the *Bey of Tunis* had violated our treaty with that power, by permitting a British ship of war to take two prizes of the *Abœllino* from the neutral port of Tunis, during the war with Britain. He left *Algiers* 8th July—obtained water and refreshments at *Cagliari* on the 15th—and, on the 25th,

anchored in the bay of *Tunis*. The Commodore communicated with the American consul, and immediately demanded ample satisfaction. The Bey, although he had a powerful marine force between him and the American squadron, acceded to the demand of $46,000, and paid the money to Mr. *Noah*, agent for the *Abœllino*, upon the 31st. Upon paying the money, the prime minister's brother, who fluently spoke English, turned to the *British* consul, then in conference with Comm. Decatur, and indignantly said,—"You see, Sir, what *Tunis* is obliged to pay for *your* insolence. I ask you, whether you think it just, *first* to violate our neutrality, and *then* to leave us to be *destroyed*, or pay for your aggressions?" Such an interrogatory from a *Mahometan* to a *Christian*, would have made Hamlet exclaim—"That is wormwood."

Upon the 2nd August, Comm. Decatur sailed for Tripoli, and anchored there upon the 5th. A combination of circumstances rendered his arrival at this place, and the situation in which he arrived, most peculiarly interesting. He once more beheld the batteries and the castle, under the guns of which, more than eleven and a half years before, he destroyed the frigate Philadelphia—and but *two days* from *eleven* years since he, with the gallant MACDONOUGH and a little crew, fought the unparalleled battle with the gun boats—slew double their own number—captured *two full-manned boats* with *one boat less than half-manned*, and avenged the death of Lieut. *Decatur*. Here too, was the theatre of *Somers'*, *Wadsworth's* and *Israel's* glory, and their glorious voluntary deaths. If gallant spirits above, are permitted to witness scenes below, with what rapture must

the spirits of these immortalized heroes have hovered over the American squadron, wafting triumphantly upon the waves from which they ascended.

From the deck of the *Macedonian*, a *visible* trophy of DECATUR's glory, the gallant Capt. *Jones* could view the castle in which he was, for many tedious months, gloomily incarcerated—from which his present commander in chief with the great Preble, restored him—and whose noble prize *he* now commanded.

Comm. Decatur immediately communicated with Mr. *Jones*, the American consul at Tripoli, and learned that the Bashaw *permitted* a British sloop of war to take two American vessels from his harbour, and *refused* protection to an American cruiser in the last war. The Commodore immediately made demand of the Bashaw for a full restitution. The sum demanded was $25,000. The governour was dispatched to the *Gurriere* to induce a diminution of the sum. He might have said—"Most potent chief, my master, the son of the Prophet, eleven years past, demanded of the great Preble, $600,000, as tribute and ransom, and received but $60,000." The Commodore might have answered—"*Your* demand arose from your *wickedness* in enslaving American citizens—*ours* arises from *justice* in claiming indemnification for your violation of our treaty. The American government paid the $60,000 out of *compassion* to your master, and we demand about half of it back as a *matter of right*—The money must be immediately paid to the American consul." It was paid.

Comm. Decatur demanded the restoration of two *Danes*, and eight Neapolitans from bondage. They

were restored, and came on board the *Gurriere* to hail their "Deliverer."

Comm. Decatur sailed for Syracuse, the principal rendezvous of Comm. *Preble's* squadron in 1803 and 1804, where the then Lieut. Decatur, with Stewart, Lawrence, Morris, Macdonough and other young and gallant ocean-warriours, digested those plans and expeditions that *began* that reputation which each of them have so nobly *advanced* since, and which may now be said to be unrivalled by any class of men who ever existed. The squadron reached there the 10th August, and upon the 20th reached *Messina*, for the purpose of making a few repairs, as the squadron had been on the wing almost constantly since it left America. He was here on the dominions of the king of Naples, and here landed the overjoyed Neapolitans whom he rescued from Tripolitan bondage.

Comm. Decatur, after sufficiently repairing, sailed for the Bay of Naples, and arrived there Sept. 2nd. Every officer in the squadron well knew, that in this bay, Nelson once received the most unbounded honors, and that in this bay, captivated by the fascinating charms, and depraved by the diabolical heart of Lady Hamilton, he impressed a stain upon his escutcheon which the splendid rays of his glory could never conceal. The murdered Neapolitan Marquis *Caracciallo*, will never be forgotten by the readers of Nelson's biography.*

The noble Decatur, with a fame untarnished, and with a grateful heart, arrived here to acknowledge a

* Vide *Southey's* Life of Nelson. *Charnock*, another biographer of Nelson has omitted this tragical story.

favour years before received from the king of Naples, or two Sicilies, and to make a suitable return for the obligation. Through the *Minister of Foreign Affairs*, he thus addressed the *King*.

*U. S. Ship Gurriere, Naples, Sept.* 8, 1815.

SIR—I have the honour to inform your excellency that in my late negociation with the Bashaw of Tripoli, I demanded and obtained the release of *eight* Neapolitan *captives*, subjects of his majesty, the king of the two Sicilies. These I have landed at *Messina*. It affords me great pleasure to have had it in my power, by this small service, to evince to his majesty the grateful sense entertained by our government, of the aid formerly rendered to us by his Majesty during our war with Tripoli.

With great respect and consideration, I have the honour to be your excellency's most obedient servant.

STEPHEN DECATUR.

*His excellency, the Marquis Cercello,*
*Secretary of State, &c. &c.*

The Marquis, after acknowledging the receipt of the letter, and laying it before "the king his master," thus proceeds.

*Naples, 12th Sept.* 1815.

SIR—His Majesty has ordered me to acknowledge this *peculiar favour* as the act of *your generosity*, which you have been pleased to call a return for the *trifling assistance* which the squadron of your nation formerly

received from his royal government during the war with Tripoli.

In doing myself the pleasure of manifesting this sentiment of my king, and of assuring you, *in his name*, that the brave American nation will *always* find in his Majesty's ports the best reception—I beg you will receive the assurances of my most distinguished consideration.

*Marquis* CERCELLO,
Secretary of State, and Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Comm. DECATUR, Commander of the Squadron of U. S. of America.

When Comm. Decatur received this acknowledgment from the king of the Two Sicilies, his noble and generous heart felt a higher satisfaction than when Nelson, from the same source received the Title and Dukedom of *Bronte*.

The Commodore, in a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, of August 31st, says—"I hope to find the relief squadron from America."—He sailed for Gibraltar, and there enjoyed the satisfaction of finding his noble friend Comm. Bainbridge, in the noble line of battle ship INDEPENDENCE, the first American ship of her rate that ever anchored in the bay of Gibraltar. She was accompanied by the *Congress*, *Chippewa*, *Saranac*, *Erie*, &c. and both Squadrons formed a junction under Comm. BAINBRIDGE.

Upon the arrival of Comm. *Bainbridge* at *Gibraltar* with the relief squadron, the officers of his Britannic Majesty's army, were as much irritated with the *names* of some of his ships, as the naval officers were with those of Comm. Decatur's. The "*Chippewa*" reminded

them of the battle of the 5th of July, 1814, in the Peninsula of Upper Canada. The "*Saranac*" of the battle of Plattsburgh, September 11th. The "*Erie*" of the splendid sortie from that fort, September 17th.

Comm. Bainbridge arrived at Carthagena about the 10th of August, 1815—proceeded to *Algiers*, and by exhibiting the *Independence* convinced the Dey of a fact which he before doubted; that the American government could build *Seventy-Fours* without the consent of that of Great Britain. He found Mr. *Shaler* and his countrymen in the enjoyment of the peace negociated a few weeks before by Comm. Decatur and him.

He then proceeded to *Tripoli*, and found the vigilant DECATUR had suddenly settled affairs with that barbarian power. It is easy to imagine the feelings of the noble Commodore upon reaching the bay of Tripoli. It was there the fine frigate Philadelphia was lost upon the rocks, under his command—and it was in the dismal dungeon now in his view, where he, Capts. *Porter*, *Jones*, *Biddle*, and his fine crew, lingered away eighteen tedious months in a bondage indescribably wretched. Had war existed, the castle where he was immured, would have been demolished by his squadron in one hour.

He then sailed for *Tunis* and found the dismayed *Tunisian Bey* had given all that DECATUR demanded,—shewed him his squadron, and took his leave.

He then sailed for Malaga, having missed Comm. Decatur, who was either at *Messina*, repairing his fleet, or at *Naples*, receiving the grateful acknowledgments of a king. At Malaga, the governour manifested a respect for Comm. Bainbridge which he never had shewn

to any *admiral*, of high or low grade. He made the Commodore a formal visit in the Independence, where afterwards, (in 1817) the President of the United States paid him the same respect. No man deserved his honours better. Comm. Bainbridge is not only an accomplished and gallant, but a *veteran* naval officer.

He met Comm. Decatur at Gibraltar—the two squadrons formed a junction at that place—and he, with infinite satisfaction, lowered *his* broad pendant, and saw that of his noble friend in life and at death, triumphantly waving over a noble fleet of SEVENTEEN SAIL: a fleet, a commander, officers, and seamen, never surpassed, if ever equalled.

*Eleven years* before this period, the little squadron of Comm. Preble had excited the admiration of the friends of the Republic and the consternation of her enemies. The achievements of this, had produced unspeakable atonishment. Comm. Bainbridge, in speaking of the Barbary powers of Africa, says—"*The only mode of convincing these people is, by occular demonstration.*" Comm. Decatur says—"*The only sure guarantee we can have for the maintenance of the peace just concluded with these people, is the presence, in the Mediterranean of a respectable naval force.*"

The disciples and followers of *Allah*, *Mahomet*, *Mahommed*, or whatever the arch impostor of *Mecca* may be called, may hereafter rest assured, that their four-times daily repeated orisons, and their devotional enumeration of beads, will no *more* save them from the *Christian* cannon of America, when they recommence their Mahometan rapacity.

# CHAPTER XVI.

**Recapitulation of Comm. Decatur's achievements &c. in the Mediterranean in 1815—Rewards by promotion—Necessity of different grades of office—Arduous duties of Department of the *Navy*—Board of NAVY COMMISSIONERS established—Comm. Decatur appointed Navy Commissioner—Duties of the Navy Commissioners—Responsibility of the office—Naval Architecture—Rates of Ships—Comparative power—Annual expense of ships of different rates—Improvement in Ship-building—*Inventions*—Assiduity of Comm. Decatur—Honours paid him—Difficulty of designating Officers—Comm. Macdonough—Comm. Barron.**

Comm. Decatur arrived in America in the *Gurriere* upon the 12th day of November 1815, having surrendered the other ships of his squadron to Comm. Bainbridge, and which returned in the squadron with him. Comm. Decatur had been absent from America *one hundred and eighty-seven days*. It may afford gratification, as it surely must excite astonishment to the reader, to *recapitulate*, in few words, the service performed, and the deeds achieved by the squadron under his command during this period—the time in which a single merchantman usually makes a voyage from an American to an European port, and back again. In this little period of time, Comm. Decatur

1. Made a voyage from *America* to *Europe* in squadron.
2. Captured an Algerine Frigate in the *Mediterranean*, killed the Algerine Admiral with 30 of his crew, and took 406 prisoners.

3. Captured a large Algerine Brig of war, with 170 prisoners, and sent her to a neutral port.
4. Negociated a most advantageous *treaty* with the Dey of *Algiers*—obtained indemnification for captures of American merchantmen, &c. &c. and released a Spanish consul and merchant from bondage.
5. Demanded and obtained indemnification from the kingdom of *Tunis*, for suffering the British to violate the *neutrality* of their port by taking American vessels.
6. Demanded and obtained from the kingdom of *Tripoli* indemnification for the *same* cause, and the release of *ten* European Christian slaves in bondage.
7. Repaired the American Squadron in a *Neapolitan* port.
8. Restored to the king of the *Two Sicilies*, *eight* of his subjects rescued from *Turkish* bondage—received his grateful acknowledgments and assurances of favour to the "*brave American nation.*"
9. Sailed down the Mediterranean and surrendered his squadron (except the *Gurriere*) in prime order to Comm. Bainbridge.
10. Made a voyage from Europe to America in the *Gurriere.*

We may fruitlessly search the annals of navigation, from the time the magnetic needle was discovered—from the days of *Vasquez de Gama*, and *Columbus*, (the first of whom *first* doubled the Cape of Good Hope, at about the same time the last discovered the continent of America) down to this period (1820) for a parallel with this accurate statement. Had Comm. Decatur, with his squadron gone merely upon a sailing "match

against time," as his skilful father did against Capt. Tryon,* he would have been far more successful than his progenitor. But how must the admiration of the reader be augmented when he reflects, that during this period he conquered one of the most powerful and warring kingdoms of *Mahomet* into peace—compelled two more refractory kingdoms of the *Prophet of Mecca* to bow to *American* prowess, and, after restoring Christian captives to their homes, received the grateful homage of a *Christian king?* The *celerity* and *power* of his movements in this justly renowned expedition, reminds one of the *passage* of the electric fluid through the atmosphere, and the *prostration* of every object it strikes, at one moment raising wonder, at the next exciting consternation.†

In this, DECATUR's *last* expedition to the *Mediterranean*, he clearly evinced the five great qualifications of an accomplished naval commander—NAUTICAL SKILL—SCIENCE IN NAVAL TACTICS—PERSEVERANCE IN PURSUIT—SKILL IN GUNNERY, and BRAVERY IN ACTION. The two last he had but little opportunity to call into operation; for the renowned *Hammida*, in the heaviest Algerine frigate *Mazouda* with a crew of from 450, to 500, was slain at the first broadside from the *Gurriere*, and at the second, his lieutenant struck the Turkish crescent to the American banner.

* Vide Chap. III.

† Lest this should be deemed "*a most fiery simile*," its extravagance is certainly less than that of a writer in *Queen Ann's* reign (the Augustan age of England) who compares the victories of the Duke of *Marlborough* to that of *Michael*, hurling *mountains* at the rebellious angels, and thrusting them out of heaven.

Comm. Decatur's arrival from the Mediterranean, diffused the most enthusiastic joy amongst his associates—the measures he had pursued received the high commendation, and unqualified approbation of the American government; and his countrymen, with an undivided voice, gave him a rank amongst the first HEROES and BENEFACTORS of the Republic.

It was ever the happiness of Comm. Decatur to know that his reputation was constantly *progressing* by every successive act of his naval life, and that in no single instance had he the mortification to perceive that it was *retrograding*. To impute this to mere "good fortune," would be a miserable eulogy upon his *active worth*, and *positive merit*. A continued series of fortunate events, not unfrequently gives a temporary *eclat*, to the man of mere negative qualities. It is a fortuitous fame, however, which vanishes with the uncertain and capricious whims of fortune which gave it existence. STEPHEN DECATUR left nothing to be decided by fortune, and submitted not the least event to its decision. To be sure, like all other men, he was liable to have his most judicious calculations, and active exertions *defeated*, by misfortunes; but if they *succeeded*, to *his* skill, energy, and perseverance, was the credit due, and to *him* was it justly given.

In a preceding chapter, the subject of having a variety of grades of office, as affording a reward for gallant deeds by promotion, was with extreme deference, however, suggested. It is not for the biographer to obtrude his own opinion upon his reader or the public. But since slightly mentioning the subject, the writer has carefully examined all the Reports of Naval

Committees, and the official opinions of the different Secretaries of the Navy, and may certainly allude to *them* without the charge of arrogance.

The Report of the Naval Committee of November 1814 states that. "The nation with whom we are now at war (Great Britain) is said to have about a thousand public ships, to command which she has not less than *two hundred* ADMIRALS, of ten different grades, ascending from *rear Admiral* of the blue, to the Admiral of the fleet."

This able committee recommended the appointment of officers above the grade of Post-Captain (now the highest) which would of course be Admirals. It has already been seen that even the Algerines had one Admiral at least, until Comm. Decatur encountered him in a single ship, and killed him in action.

The Hon. William Jones, the vigilant and active Secretary of the Navy, during almost the whole of the second war with Britain, thus forcibly and elegantly expresses himself upon this subject :—"Captains of long and honourable standing, cannot but contrast the cheerless prospect of promotion in the naval service, with the rapid and high distinction which their military brethren, with equal, but not higher pretensions, have attained."

Let the "contrast" be presented to the reader.—Two-fifths if not one half of the whole force of the Republic in the second war, was in the Navy.

IN THE ARMY were 8 *Major-Generals*,
16 *Brigadier Generals*.
The immense number of *Colonels*, *Lieutenant Colonels*, *Majors*, *Cap-*

*tains*, and *Lieutenants*, may be easily calculated upon the principles upon which the army was organized.

The NAVY had and still has but three *grades* of office—*Post Captains*, *Masters Commandants* and *Lieutenants ;* the *title* of *Commodore*, as previously remarked, arising solely from the *circumstance*, of being *senior* officer in a squadron. It is presumed that some of our venerated and gallant *Post-Captains* have held that *immoveable* rank (unless it be by *removal from the Navy*) for more than *twenty-five years*. Although the subject is a "cheerless" one indeed, I hope to be pardoned for the levity of remarking, that the elder gallant officers of the American Navy, whose locks have been blanched upon the ocean, and whose crowns have become bald in the service of their country, have not to impute the *last*, as an old British Post-Captain did, to the numerous *junior* officers who had *travelled over his head*, to the dignity of *Admirals*—for our government have not *yet* seen fit to give to our noble Navy a *single Admiral*.

The Hon B. W. CROWNINSHIELD, who came into the Navy Department upon the retirement of Mr. Jones, in his *first* communication, recommended the creation of the rank of *Admiral*. He thus cogently assigns the reason—"It has been seen and lamented, that for want of this grade of command, the gallantry of a *subordinate* officer could be rewarded by *promotion*, while his gallant *superior* officer must remain *stationary*."

In 1814, out of the immense navy of Britain, she had but *ninety-nine* 74s *in commission*, and she had *two hundred and nine admirals*—besides *twenty-seven*, upon

half pay! In 1820, in the *House of Lords*, there are *thirteen* Peers of the Realm raised to that high dignity for *naval* achievements. Perhaps the asseveration of Shakespeare's ever-living facetious knight will apply to this case—"*It is ever the way of this, our English nation to make too much of a good thing*;" and if a boundless national debt, and interminable ramifications of taxation, are "good things" the blessings of them have been somewhat increased in this way.

But, while pouring out the effusions of our grateful hearts in admiration of our peerless Naval Champions, let us not diminish our confidence in the unequalled government of our majestic Republic. In the course of these hasty sketches, the caution of our rulers, in augmenting the *national debt*, by suddenly advancing the national glory, has been adverted to, and will not be repeated.* It redounds to their endless honour—it extorts encomiums from our bitterest enemies—it imparts to our countrymen the richest blessings. To say they have been too stinted in their economy, in regard to the Navy; and illiberal in their rewards to our naval heroes, would require an arrogance which but few, even of our untutored, unthinking, and visionary politicians possess. But as ours is a government of the *people*, the people may fearlessly, although respectfully express their sentiments of the *government*. The voice of the people must and will prevail. To resist it, if it were possible, is not just, and if it were just, is not possible. It is presumed then, that our Civil Fathers will in a proper time, and in a proper manner,

* Vide Chap. V.

bestow those rewards by *rank* and *emolument*, which our gallant Ocean Warriours so richly deserve.

Mr. Secretary *Hamilton*, *Jones* and *Crowninshield*, and the most distinguished Post-Captains, all concurred in the opinion of the indispensible necessity of creating a *Board of Navy-Commissioners*. The great and diversified duties of the Navy Department had so accumulated, that it became wholly impracticable for the most capable and laborious secretary to discharge the duties of it with honour to himself and advantage to the nation.—The Naval Committee of 1815, discovered alarming abuses in the Navy, from, to use their language—

1st. The excessive and laborious duty of the Secretary.

2nd. The want of sufficient *checks upon*, and the *consequent irresponsibility of*, subordinate agents.

3rd. The great latitude allowed commanders in altering, repairing, and finishing their ships.

Congress, in the session of 1815, established the board of Navy Commissioners, and the President, by and with the advice of the Senate, appointed Comm. *Rogers*, Capts. *Hull*, and *Porter* to the high and important duties of the office. Never was there a more judicious selection of officers. They were all veterans of the "Mediterranean School." The *first* was the vigilant watchman over American commerce and seamen during the *war in disguise* with Britain, and *dared* return the fire of a Britiih ship of War. In *open* war the frigate *President*, drew after her an immense portion of the British fleet, and enabled a vast amount of American property to reach our shores in safety. The

*second*, brought down the *first* British flag of the first British frigate that ever struck to an equal force. The *third*, when an impudent British commander of a force something inferiour to him, bore down upon the Essex, almost sunk him in eight minutes. He sent the *first* British flag to Washington. With the Essex he swept British commerce from the immense Pacific ocean.—The *Essex*—but where could we stop in detailing her achievements. She drained the coffers of British merchants, and the treasury of England of wealth sufficient to build the whole of the then American Navy.

Upon the return of Comm. Decatur from the Mediterranean, and the retirement of Capt. Hull, he succeeded him as a Navy Commissioner.

As it regards *his* capability of discharging the highly important and very responsible duties of this station, I need say nothing to those who have had the patience to peruse these imperfect sketches of his life.

The duties of a *Navy Commissioner*, (so far as the organization of the government, and the navy of America and England have an analogy) corresponds with that of a *Lord of Admiralty* in the latter country. It is always the part of wisdom to accumulate wisdom even from the experience of enemies; and although our commanders, seamen, discipline, naval skill, &c. have been proved to be decidedly superiour to their enemy's, yet it might be erroneous to say that they have not derived, in past times, *some* benefit, in this respect, from the first maritime power in the universe.

The duties of the board of Navy Commissioners are as multifarious as the vast variety of Naval concerns; and although the President of the United States, and

the Secretary of the Navy have a paramount authority, yet, through this board, almost every important measure *originates*. From voluminous reports and documents the following brief outline is collected. The Board

1. Determine the various classes of ships to be built, quality of materials, models, &c.
2. Establish regulations for the necessary expenditures, and the correct accounting for them.
3. Regulations for ascertaining the actual state of decayed, damaged or defective vessels, and the disposition of them.
4. Regulations for the Naval Service, at Sea and upon the Lakes.
5. Regulations for flotillas, and for every species of harbour defence.
6. Regulations for Navy-yards, Arsenals, depot of stores, materials, &c.
7. Regulations for cruising ships, ships in port, for the recruiting service, officers on duty on shore, and on furlough.
8. A system for hospitals, and the medical department.
9. Regulations for the conduct of Pursers, fixing their emolument—mode of accounting and securing seamen from undue advantages.
10. Regulations for the examination of the officers of the Navy below Master-Commandant—classing them in the scale of merit—determining *promotions*, and the applications for warrant appointments.

These important duties, with all their various ramifications, surely must need the most comprehensive views, and the most minute acquaintance with naval science. They also require the most unceasing vigilance

and application. No wonder that abuses should have crept into the Navy, and that a succession of Secretaries should have urged an establishment of such a board. These abuses have been corrected, and the pecuniary affairs of the Navy are now as accurately adjusted as the accounts of an educated merchant.

Although *confidence*, to a certain degree, must be reposed in every agent of the Republic, yet that confidence ought ever to be under the controling hand of *responsibility*. The guardians of our rights will never adopt the sentiment of an English minister, who demanded from Parliament "necessary confidence," and who was answered by one of the greatest statesman who ever graced the councils of Britain. "*Necessary confidence* in the public agents, is at best but a *necessary evil*, and ought not to be reposed." Our rulers, thanks to the stubborn and unyielding resistance against corruption, have not yet passed "*Acts of Indemnity*"* to shield encroachments upon the Constitution, and peculations in the Treasury from punishment.

Comm. Decatur brought into this board his whole experience—his whole vigilance, and his unspotted integrity. In his brother commissioners, he found men like himself, devoted to the best interest of the Navy and the country. A new era commenced in our growing naval establishment. Order was brought out of confusion, and system was substituted for derangement. They were to the Navy, what the unequalled HAMILTON once was to the Treasury.

* Such acts have frequently been passed to shield a British minister from disgrace and punishment.

It might be supposed that this was a relief from his arduous duties upon the ocean. Ask Comm. Rodgers and Capt. Porter if it were so ? Ask them if their perpetual duties, do not excite unremitting solicitude, and call forth every exertion of the mind and the body ? Even the *details* of common business, which require nothing but ordinary attention, without any exertion of judgment, is irksome and fatiguing—add to this the necessity of *improvement* where errors have been discovered, and of *invention*, where some new regulation is necessary—add again, the exposure to censure, when mistaken, and the cold and hesitating approbation when right, and the official duties of a Navy Commissioner will assume an aspect far from captivating, but these duties must be performed.

*Naval Architecture*, more than any one in the whole circle of the arts, requires original genius, taste and judgment. The *ancient orders* of architecture, in erecting temples, palaces and mansions *upon earth ;* and the little improvement, and great injuries they have sustained by *modern architects*, are easily learned by the commonest ability, and reduced to practice by mere mechanical ingenuity. So plain is the road in *this* art, that he who reads may run in it ; and if by ignorance or wilfulness he strays from it, he gets involved in an inextricable labyrinth of blunders, from which he can only be relieved by retracing his wandering steps. But in the erection of SHIPS, there can hardly be said to be an *established principle*, for where there is, there may be *uniformity*. Why is it often said that such and such a ship is the *best sailer* in the American or British Navy ? Why did Comm. Decatur say so of the *Macedonian ?*

and why was his noble father in the *Philadelphia*, beaten by Capt. Tryon in the *Connecticut*, in a sailing-match? Why did the naval architects of *Britain* take models from the wretched *Chesapeake*, when broken up, when she was deemed altogether the most ill-constructed ship in the *American* Navy? It was owing even to *her* superiority over their own. If the *President* and the *Essex*, were not too much battered and riddled by the *squadrons* of Comm. Hays and Hillyer, to have reached British ports perhaps the ship-carpenters of his majesty George IV. may derive a still greater benefit from scrutinizing the wrecks of them. They are the *only* models they will ever have in their ports, unless they are gained by the same overwhelming superiority of force.

Although our Navy cannot number the years contained in a quarter of a century, yet, in point of elegance, strength, power, and celerity, our ships most decidedly surpass any that have floated upon the ocean from the days of Carthage to this age. Witness the *escapes* of the *Constitution*, *Argus*, *Hornet*, *Peacock*, *&c.* and the *victories* of every one of our ships in fair and equal combat; and, to mention the most signal instance of rapidity in movement, witness the *Gurriere*, and Comm. Decatur's *second* squadron in 1815.

It is to the skill, genius, and *inventive* faculties of our Navy-Commissioners, Post-Captains, and Naval Architects that we owe this American superiority, in the *construction* of our ships. But their *armament* also is of prime consideration. The reader may be gratified by a very brief sketch, made from voluminous docu-

ments of the *comparative* force of ships of *different rate.*

In the *British* Navy there are four denominations of ships—1. *Ships of the line*, from the largest, down to *Sixty-Fours.* 2. *Fifty-fours* to *Fifties*, a distinct class but rated with the line of battle ships. 3. *Forties*, to *Twenties*, unexceptionably rated as Frigates. All the foregoing are commanded by Post-Captains. 4. *Eighteens*, to *Sixteens*, are *Sloops of War.* All are *pierced* and *mount* more guns than they are *registered* at. Besides these there are Schooners, Fire-ships, Bombards, Gun-boats, Tenders, Cutters, &c. &c.

In the *American* Navy are, *Seventy-fours, Forty-fours, Thirty-twos, Sixteens, Brigs, Schooners, Gun-boats, &c.*

The *comparative* force of *Seventy-fours* and *Forty-fours*, (although at first it may excite surprize) is as *one* to *three.* It is demonstrated thus: a 74, at one round, discharges 3224 lbs. of shot; a 44, discharges 1360 lbs. As the *class* of ships is increased, the *force* is increased, in proportion of *one* to *three.* Seventy-fours are stronger in scantling, thicker in sides and bottom, less penetrable to shot, and less liable to be battered. A *Seventy-four* is a fair match for three 44's in action. To give the frigates the most favourable position, two at the quarter and stern, and one abreast of the 74. From the superiour weight of metal in the destructive battery of the 74, the frigate abreast would be dismasted or sunk with two broadsides. In the mean time, the quarter and stern of the 74 *might* not be essentially injured; and when a broadside could be brought to bear upon the other two frigates, they must share the fate of the first. Still, three frigates might

take a 74, and, what is quite as probable, a 74 might capture or sink three frigates.

The relative efficiency of *Frigates* and *Sloops of War* is at least as *one* to *two*; and nearly the same reasoning will apply to them as to 74's and 44's. The *Cyane* was frigate built, and mounted 34 guns; the *Levant*, 21, and yet the gallant and accomplished Capt. CHARLES STEWART, (from whose enumerations the preceding statement was collated,) captured them both in 40 minutes.

Having very briefly alluded to the *erection* and *armament* of ships, I will with still greater brevity allude to the *expense* of both, premising that the astonishing saving of money has been effected by the indefatigable exertions of the *Secretary* and *Commissioners* of the Navy. Twenty years ago, the expense of building and equipping a 74 was estimated at $342,700; only *seven* years ago, at $300,000. The expense of a 74, and of consequence, of every description of ships is reduced nearly *one third*. The *annual* expense of a 74, *in commission* in 1812, was estimated at $202,110; its annual expense now, (1820) including repairs, is 183,529 64; a 44 gun Frigate, $133,985 73; a 36 gun Frigate, $110,557 19; a Sloop of War, $59,069 42; a Brig, $39,774 67; a large Schooner, $23,350, and small, $6,452; a Gun-Boat, or Galley, $6,243; a Steam Frigate, $59,660 41; a Block-Ship, $39,774 67; a Receiving Ship, $4,240. The reason of mentioning the minute sums is, that the writer prefers "official documents" to "vague conjectures."

Comm. Decatur was indefatigable in discharging the duties of his important, responsible and difficult station. Those duties, as they were discharged in the cabinet,

excited no applause from the multitude, who knew not their importance. He was no longer engaged in bringing down the Cross of St. George, in the Atlantic, or the Turkish Crescent, in the Mediterranean. His pursuits attracted no attention from the world which must always have a brilliant object before it to produce its admiration. But the acute penetration of a CROWNINSHIELD in the Navy Department, and of a RODGERS and a PORTER in the Board of the Navy, full well knew and duly appreciated his surpassing excellence. As our Navy has justly become the favourite of the Republic, JAMES MONROE, President of the United States, and, by the Constitution, Commander in Chief of the maritime, (as well as the military force,) was here enabled to discover the profound science of Comm. Decatur in naval tactics. He had before, in common with our countrymen, participated largely in the enthusiastic rapture produced by his unequalled victories in the Mediterranean sea, and on the Atlantic ocean; he here had an opportunity to notice the *theory* of that almost mysterious system, which enabled him, no less than his dauntless bravery, to achieve them. Comparisons have always been justly pronounced odious, and will not be entered into. All the American naval officers of the first grade, are accomplished commanders. They have undoubtedly acquired some of the theory of their profession from *books*; but as books never teach the use of books, they have reduced the *knowledge* they acquired from them in the closet, to actual *practice* upon the ocean.

The confidence reposed in Comm. Decatur when he was appointed a Navy Commissioner, by the cautious, penetrating, and profound Statesmen, who placed him

there, evinced his entire fitness to fill the high and important station. His survivors in that station will not doubt the judiciousness of the choice. Nor will a MURRAY, a BAINBRIDGE, or a CAMPBELL, his seniors, doubt it. There was *one* more senior to him, and *he could not doubt it*—it was Comm. JAMES BARRON.

Comm. Decatur had other views than those who hold a *sinecure* office under the monarch of Britain, who derive an immense *reward* from their government without rendering any *service* to the nation. In order to *discharge* his duties to that country to which his gallant and patriotic father had devoted him, he was aware that he must first *understand* it. Knowing that a ship of war, if originally badly *constructed*, could never be *amended*, he sought for the best information that could be obtained from ancient and modern experience. He knew full well that *Englishmen* claimed all the "original discoveries" that had been made in modern Naval Architecture. He knew that one Englishman claimed the invention of "*diagonal braces*," and the construction of ships by "timbers so closely adhering to each other, and caulked, as to be impervious to water." He knew also that they claimed the invention of "iron cables." He knew that they claimed the invention of "iron knees" for ships. Without violently disputing the claims of our trans-atlantic enemies, he was solicitous that the American Navy should have all the benefit of these discoveries, let them have originated wherever they did. At the same time he *knew* where they *did* originate. He knew that the first claimed invention was not original with Englishmen. He knew that the invention of the Steam Frigate "with timbers impervi-

ous to water," by that unparalleled mechanist, FULTON, the model of which he examined at New-London, when blockaded there, by an immensely superior force, was made many months *anterior* to any pretensions of an English architect. As to "iron cables," he knew that they had been used on the Delaware river, on the banks of which he spent his early life, long before an English architect knew their use.* As to "iron knees," he knew that Comm. Truxton shewed an American naval architect the "iron knees" of the frigate *Insurgente*, captured by him in the little Constellation, in 1799. All these improvements became *familiar* with *Americans*, before *Englishmen* pretend to have *discovered* them.

While England claims to be the mother of America, let her not forget that the child will not forever bear the unprovocated rod of his parent. Nor—"Lick the hand just rais'd to shed its blood"—and that sometimes he surpasses his progenitors in science and achievements.

Comm. Decatur, although ever ready to meet the enemies of his country, in combat, never detracted from their skill or gallantry. He would as readily ac-

* The writer, in investigating this subject, had an interview with *one* of the oldest and most experienced ship-builders in New-England. He commenced the business at fourteen, and excepting the period of the Revolutionary War, in which he was a gallant soldier under Gen. PUTNAM, followed it to this time (1820.) He distinctly remembers examining a "chain cable" upon an armed *American* ship in New-York, in 1783, when discharged from the army, and minutely described it. He did not fight in the *second* war, but he would *now* nerve his arm at the sight of Capt. *Shortland*, who assassinated his son in *Dartmoor Prison* in 1814!!

knowledge the real skill and prowess of an Englishman as a Turk, both of whom he had conquered, and both of whom he had treated with humanity and respect, when he had vanquished them. He was aware that his countrymen were as *inventive*, in improving the construction of ships, as they were skilful in navigating and fearless in fighting them; and preferred the *real superiority* of his own, to the gasconading boasts of another nation.

But while Comm. Decatur was thus engaged in advancing the permanent force of the American Navy, temporary relaxations from the intensity of application to his official duties, enabled him to participate in the captivating enjoyments of accomplished society, beside that which the metropolis afforded.

*Three* states lay in their claim to him as a *citizen*—*Maryland*, because he was *born* in it—*Pennsylvania*, because he *adopted* it, and *Virginia* because she furnished him, with the source of his most exquisite enjoyment, a lovely, dignified, and accomplished bosom companion. It is not necessary to decide which state has the best claim to *citizenship*; suffice it to say, each of them strived to outvie each other in *civility* to him, whenever his short excursions led him into them. His entry into their larger towns, although in the most unostentatious style, called forth every possible demonstration of esteem, respect, and admiration. It was not the unmeaning and idolatrous veneration which a degraded and humiliated people pay to monarchs and princes who have no claim upon their affection, and which proceeds more from fear than attachment—it was the voluntary effusion of the heart, proceeding

from a knowledge of his inestimable worth, and an acknowledgment of the incalculable services he had rendered the Republic.

The refined and patriotic citizens of *Baltimore*, ever prompt in serving their country themselves, and equally ready to manifest their respect for those who have, presented Comm Decatur with a superb service of plate, upon each piece of which was this inscription—

"THE CITIZENS OF BALTIMORE, TO COMM. DECATUR."

"Rebus gestis insigni—ob virtutes dilecto."*

Although the *classical* examiner would readily see from this inscription that the citizens of Baltimore conveyed the truth admitted by all, that Comm. Decatur, was "*Distinguished for his heroism, and admired for his virtues*," yet some observers might not be so fortunate.

The citizens of *Norfolk*, (Vir.) than whom, no portion of Americans better knew the private and public worth of Comm. Decatur, besides the constant display of *individual* esteem, invited him to a splendid *public* dinner. It is upon such occasions, that the frank and unsophisticated sentiments of generous bosoms are elucidated. Surrounding the festive board, and casting their eyes upon the Hero of the Mediterranean, they gave in unison, this sentiment—than which, nothing could be more forcibly conceived, or elegantly expressed.

Although it is readily admitted, that the most elegant *mottos* are to be found in this most elegant of languages, yet as *English* is the *language* of *Americans*, however different their *principles*, would it not be more judicious to convey our *ideas* in our vernacular *tongue*?

"THE CRESCENT—Its lustre was *dimmed*, even by the *twinkling* of our STARS."

Such a sentiment was worthy of the present generation of Virginians, amongst whose fathers, in the war of the Revolution, were WASHINGTON, JEFFERSON, MADISON, MONROE and PATRICK HENRY. It compelled Comm. Decatur to take a sudden retrospect of his eventful life in the Mediterranean—his capture of the Intrepid—his destruction of the Philadelphia frigate, and his unparalleled conflict with the Gun-boats.

At *Petersburgh*, in that patriotic state, they were no less ardent in their attachment to the favourite, and favoured DECATUR. After receiving every public demonstration of respect that could be shown, he gave the following, modest, ingenuous, and grateful sentiment.

"THE CITIZENS OF PETERSBURGH—They render honours to *those* for services, which *they themselves* have exceeded."

In Philadelphia, he was always received with *rapture*, for there they "*knew him best.*" His early companions presented him with a splendid service of plate, accompanied with a most finished and elegant letter. A short extract from his answer will be inserted. "I beg the committee, composed of *names* with which my earliest and most agreeable ideas are *associated*, to accept my warmest thanks for the very flattering sentiments you have expressed toward me."

The events in the Navy Department, not immediately connected with the life and character of STEPHEN DECATUR, cannot be enlarged upon. From the time he entered upon the arduous duties of a Navy-Com-

missioner, his mind was completely engrossed by them; every other object was of secondary consideration. Amidst these duties however, he participated in the captivating enjoyments of the metropolis. He enjoyed the society of the great men of our great Republic, there stationed to manage its vast concerns. He here appeared in the capacity of a *Statesman*, and excited no less respect than when he appeared in the more dazzling character of a *Hero*. With the Secretary of the Navy, his brother Commissioners, and naval officers, he was perfectly at home; and surely, amongst all the objects of magnitude, that involves the profound reflections of our rulers, no one surpasses, nor indeed equals that of naval defence. With a sea-board of three thousand miles,—indented with some of the largest bays, sounds and rivers in the world—their borders and mouths, containing much of the vast wealth accumulated from the interiour—assailable in numberless points by a naval enemy, it is reduced to absolute demonstration, that our safety in future depends, much, very much upon *naval power*. However much we may be struck with the formidable power of land batteries, the experience of modern warfare evinces clearly, the vast superiority of batteries that are floating. With our majestic ships of the line, our frigates, sloops and Brigs, Americans can carry our arms where they find our enemies, and make them flee from where they are found. If they dare intrude upon our harbours, they will meet with that novel, that tremendous, that almost resistless engine of death and destruction, the STEAM FRIGATE. To be sure our immense frontier is to be guarded by *armies*, and *fortifications*; but even

there, a *moving* rampart of high-minded men, is found to be vastly more efficient than stationary forts, redoubts and breast-works. Present to the enemy our *flying* artillery, and a rampart, formed by a front, bristled with *bayonets*, and led on by brandishing *swords*, an enemy will much sooner retire than they would from a fort which they might besiege with safety at a secure distance—which they might possibly overcome by starvation, or conquer by an overwhelming superiority of force. But the writer, in *this* volume, has nothing to do with the *army* of the Republic, it belongs, with all its imperfections and errors to the *Navy*. It was only intended to shew, that a *moveable* force is every where preferable to a stationary one, *any where*.

The most difficult duty, and, in a *personal* point of view, the most liable to censure, that Comm. Decatur had to perform, as Navy-Commissioner, was the selection of officers for different commands. In every other of the vast variety of duties he had to discharge, in conjunction with the Secretary of the Navy, and his brother Commissioners, they related to the Navy *generally*; and *equally* effected *every one* from the *highest* to the *lowest grade* of officers. But in restoring officers to commands, after they had been *suspended* from them by arrests, inquiries, and trials, and after the term of suspension, after inquiries and trials, had expired, exposed them to the personal animadversions of every naval officer who had been implicated.

The President of the United States, during the period of Comm. Barron's most important command, thus expresses himself—" *Of the various executive duties, no one excites more anxious concern, than that of placing*

*the interest of our fellow-citizens in the hands of honest men, with understanding sufficient for their stations. No duty at the same time is more difficult to fulfil.*"

Numerous instances upon this subject might be mentioned; but perhaps no one so signal as that of the arrest of Comm. *Macdonough* by Comm. *Stewart* in the Mediterranean in 1819 can be alluded to. The particulars are not sufficiently known to the writer to give a minute detail: and were they so, the limits of this work would forbid them. Suffice it to say, he was arrested by Comm. Stewart—deprived of his command, to which his junior succeeded; and he arrived at the seat of government to account for his conduct. Upon his arrival there, the President of the United States, the Secretary of the Navy, and the Navy Commissioners, beheld one of the heroes of the Mediterranean and the hero of Champlain under arrest! His unspotted life—his unexampled modesty—his achievements in the wars against Turks and Englishmen, induced them all to hope that he was "not guilty."

No one could possibly enter into the feelings of the endeared *Macdonough*, like STEPHEN DECATUR. He had been his favourite Midshipman in the Mediterranean—he had followed wherever he led, and where but few others *would* follow. He had seen him add one of the most splendid trophies to the naval prowess of America over England—he must have hoped that he had not even made a *mistake* in his duty. But what was the admiration of the noble DECATUR, when he found his beloved friend, as noble as himself, ingenuously acknowledging that *he had been mistaken?* MACDONOUGH had often achieved victories over the enemies

of his country—he here achieved his greatest—it was a victory over himself. Comm. Decatur enjoyed the infinite satisfaction of seeing Comm. Macdonough immediately after placed in the highest command which one, commanding a single ship, in the American Navy, *can* be placed—that of the command of a SEVENTY-FOUR.

Comm. Barron, whose name stands the third in the Naval Register of the American Republic, had long been out of service. He had been *suspended* from the naval service in consequence of the well known "affair of the Chesapeake and Leopard frigates;" the details of which would be harrowing up, and opening afresh the most aggravated wound ever inflicted upon the honour of the American Navy. The writer hesitates as he approaches the subject. From that disastrous affair, more than from any other cause, arose the second war between our peaceful Republic and imperious Britain; and, if any calamity greater than war to our country *could* have visited it, it essentially contributed to the tragical—the disastrous death of STEPHEN DECATUR.

# CHAPTER XVII.

Comm. Barron solicits a command in the Navy—Comm. Decatur's opinion as to his re-admission into the Navy---The unfortunate misunderstanding between them---It eventuates in a challenge to single combat, from Barron to Decatur---Duelling---Result of the meeting---Immediate effects of it---Honours to the remains of Comm. Decatur---Funeral ceremonies at his interment---His CHARACTER.

The writer approaches to the conclusion of these sketches, with a solicitude, if possible, greater than that which he has experienced in the progress of them. His blood almost congeals as he writes—his heart throbs at every sentence—and his feeble powers sensibly experience their insufficiency to portray the calamitous catastrophe and its calamitous consequences. It is not for the writer to fathom the *motives* of Comm. JAMES BARRON, nor pronounce a sentence upon a *deed* which has spread mourning through our vast Republic. To his Country and to his Creator is he accountable. STEPHEN DECATUR'S fame would acquire no new tint of lustre by an attempt to throw a shade over the character of the surviving combatant. A Dearborn could not blast the fame of a PUTNAM, by attempting to erect the fabrick of *his* glory upon his ruins. Comm. Barron is too generous to triumph over a fallen hero, or attempt to tarnish his fame.

Let the reader peruse the following unvarnished tale, and as nothing will be recorded with a view of impairing the *living* reputation of Comm. Barron, so

nothing will be omitted to defend the *memory* of Comm. Decatur—consecrated by death. *Defend*, did I say? let me retract—his memory needs not the defence of the living. His posthumous fame can neither be augmented by eulogy, nor diminished by aspersion.

As a NAVY COMMISSIONER, Comm Decatur had an important official duty to perform; and for the performance of it, he was accountable to his superiours, to his country, to his conscience, and his Creator. Let his decision have affected whom it might, the reputation, the honour, and the glory of the American Navy, were ever first in his thoughts, first in his words, and first in his deeds. Having been devoted to the naval service of his country by his noble father, and by his own ardent heroism, he had ever manifested a readiness to spill his blood, and spend his life in advancing its glory. The Navy was his pole star; and his views were as undeviatingly fixed upon it, as the needle points to the pole. He had arisen from the lowest to the highest grade of command in actual service, and forever submitted to the orders of his superiours, and the decisions of naval tribunals, without an animadversion. When called upon to *decide* upon the conduct of others, he approved or disapproved as his well-informed judgment dictated. Personal attachments, and also personal antipathies (if he had any) were merged and swallowed up in the paramount interest of the Navy.

When placed in the important official station of Navy-Commissioner, he had the highly delicate, and responsible duty of a judge of merit and demerit to perform. It would require some being "*more than man*" to satisfy all, and in some instances, decisions might meet with

reprehensions, from those who were "*less than man*" ought to be. His motto in this capacity was—"*Be just, and fear not.*" When called upon by official duty to decide a question which might affect his *senior* in the Navy, he as fearlessly and as impartially pronounced his judgment, as in the case of the *youngest Midshipman.* Unspotted himself as an officer, he made himself the standard of naval character. Alas! the model was too perfect for universal imitation, and he perhaps too unyielding and too tenacious, in adhering to it. The honour of the American Navy was to him as the virtue of a wife was to Cæzar—"It must not only be *chaste*—it must be *unsuspected.*" If there ever was degeneracy in the Navy, he was always too exalted to sink to it, and too elevated to be approached by it.

Thus fixed, and thus undeviating, Comm. Barron solicited the Navy Department for a re-instatement, in his command in the Navy. Comm. Decatur had served under him in the Mediterranean, in 1804, and succeeded him in the command of the *Chesapeake* frigate in 1807. From the last mentioned period to 1819, Comm. Barron had not been in actual service, although he had ever been under *that pay* which was established for officers in his situation. In that year, (1819) Comm. Decatur, as Navy Commissioner, had to express his opinion in regard to the fitness of Comm. Barron to take a command in the Navy. He did express it in his official capacity, and in interviews with officers of the Navy.

As to the "affair with the Chesapeake," in 1807, however deeply it might have wounded the honour of the Navy, he had nothing to do. Comm. Barron had suffered the disabilities which a court martial adjudged;

and *those* disabilities had ceased—the time of his suspension from service had expired. But, Comm Decatur, frankly, and unreservedly declared, that "*he entertained, and still did entertain the opinion that his conduct as an officer, since that affair, had been such, as ought forever to bar his re-admission into the service,*" at the same time unequivocally declaring that he "*disclaimed all personal enmity toward him.*"

As to the sentence of the court-martial, although approved by the President of the United States, Comm. Barron declared it to be "*cruel and unmerited,*" and further remarks—"*It is the privilege of a man deeply injured as I have been by that decision, and conscious of not deserving it, to remonstrate against it.*" Before what tribunal that remonstrance was to be made, is not conceived. As to his conduct since the promulgation of that sentence, Comm. Barron endeavoured to exculpate himself from every imputation.*

A long and animated correspondence commenced between these officers in June 1819, and terminated in February, 1820. It is sincerely to be lamented that it ever met the public eye—it is deeply to be regretted that the jealous enemies of our rising Navy, ever pored over it with malignant satisfaction—for satisfaction it will ever be to them to discover disaffection between our accomplished and gallant Naval officers. While Americans lament the personal altercations between *Perry* and *Heath*, *Decatur* and *Barron*, &c. our enemies rejoice at them.

Without dwelling longer upon a subject pregnant with the most gloomy reflections, we must now add, that the various explanations and recriminations, be-

* Vide correspondence of Decatur and Barron.

tween Commodores Decatur and Barron, ended in a direct call from the last to meet the first in the field of single combat, and which he accepted.*

This is no place to enter into a dissertation upon the subject of *duelling*, nor will it be attempted. It belongs to the *Legislators* of our Republic to enact laws upon the subject—it belongs to *Judicial Tribunals* to enforce them—it belongs to the Ministers of our Holy Religion to pronounce the canons of the Divine Law—it belongs to the Teachers of Morality to inculcate its doctrines upon this practice. Above all, it belongs to the most distinguished officers of our Navy and Army to evince *their sentiments* upon this subject by *their examples*. They have devoted themselves to the "Profession of Arms." It is a profession in which a high sense of honour forms the prominent feature. Not that superficial, puerile and execrable sense of honour which is founded upon the mere unmeaning punctilios of modern refinement, modern effeminacy, and modern degeneracy. That sense of honour is meaned, which led our ancestors to proclaim us free—to scorn submission to tyrants—to face them upon ocean and upon earth, and to pour out their richest blood for their *country*. Their arms were turned against the *enemies of the Republic*, and not *against each other !*

* In 1799, the Earl of St. Vincent (Sir *John Jervis*) received a challenge from Sir *John Orde*, for giving a preference to Sir *Horatio Nelson* in the command of a squadron. It was of course accepted. But the friends of the parties interfered. The civil authority put their *lordships* under bonds for keeping the peace, and restrained two gallant officers from making war upon each other.

While the officer of genuine honour will avoid the infliction of a wound upon the reputation of his superior, equal, or inferior, he will equally avoid that unrestrained resentment which calls upon him to violate the laws of Earth, of Heaven, and of Honour itself. It is impossible to ascertain the degree of moral guilt between him whose provocation rouses up the spirit of revenge, and him whose vengeance can be appeased only with blood. Alas! within the last quarter of a century, our Republic has been called to mourn the destruction of many of her best citizens upon that *Aceldema*—"*The field of Honour.*" A catalogue will not be attempted, for it would present an awful chasm in our greatness.

*The twenty-second day of March*, 1820, ought to be kept as an anniversary of grief—a day of lamentation. Upon that fatal, bloody day, the rich tribute of DECATUR's veins was poured out upon the plains of Bladensburg by the hand of a brother officer. As he was approaching the fatal spot, and as no voice of human persuasion could deter him from his awful determination, why could not some ministering angel of sparing mercy have thus addressed him.—"Erring and inconsiderate mortal, forbear! Although it is not given you to pierce the impervious veil which still conceals unknown worlds from your view, yet pause and reflect! Remember your country to which you have devoted yourself,—to which your service and life belong—and which has so abundantly rewarded your valour! Remember the enemies you have fought—the victories you have won—the dangers you have escaped—the glory you have acquired. Remember the declaration of your sainted

father—"OUR CHILDREN ARE THE PROPERTY OF OUR COUNTRY."—Remember your brother, whose fate you escaped, and whose death you avenged—Remember your surviving relatives and associates, who now anxiously await your fate—Remember the tender and affectionate companion of your bosom, whose throbbing and agitated heart, in breathless expectation and horrour, listens the report of the fearful shot. And, above all, remember that Preserving Providence which has guarded you in the midst of death, in justifiable warfare, and tremble at the thought of entering into a contest in open violation of his decrees. Is fame your object? you have *already* reached its temple. Is vengeance your design? it must not be—*that* belongs to heaven. Return, therefore, to your exalted station, and to the bosom of your anxious family."

But no monitory voice from the heavens above, and no voice "*crying aloud from the ground*," dissuaded the ambitious CHALLENGER from advancing to the field. The CHALLENGED Decatur suffered his chivalrous conceptions of *honour*, to overcome the dictates of philosophy—the claims of his country—the entreaties of his real friends, and his own conscientious scruples, in regard to the propriety of the act, to meet his unrelenting opponent in the field of single combat; and there, arm to arm, furnished with deadly weapons, to decide a controversy which nothing but the capricious determination of fate could put to rest.

The accompanying friends of the militant parties, after the "*dreadful notes of preparation*" were sounded, silently waited the result. The incomparable military skill of the combatants, so often successfully exercised

against the enemies of their country, was alas! too fatally skillful upon this awful occasion. At the same moment they both fired—at nearly the same place both inflicted a wound—at the same moment they both fell—one *mortally*, the other *severely* wounded.

Comm. Decatur was accompanied to the place allotted for the shocking catastrophe, by Comm. Bainbridge as his second, and his surgeon. Comm. Barron was accompanied by Capt. Elliot, as his second, and his surgeon. No explanation took place upon the field. The result of the interview has been briefly, for it *could not* otherwise be detailed. Who can, even at this lapse of time, expatiate over the gushing wound of Decatur in *retrospect?* Who must not have been petrified with horror that *actually* beheld the life's blood of this unsurpassed hero, crimsoning the turf of his native country; and let forth, by the hand of a native countryman, and that hand at the same time, paralyzed by a wound all but mortal.

When the wounded combatants viewed each other at but few paces distant, with what agony must their fixed eyes have gazed? Not from the agony of their *wounds*—for mere pain of *body*, *any* man of fortitude will bear without a groan. But "a wounded *spirit*, *who* can bear?" While yet the lamp of life was unextinguished in either of them, the well-nerved arms which just now pointed the deadly weapons, from which issued the unerring messengers of death, were now tremblingly extended in token of *reconciliation*. Oh! why could not these stern, unyielding devotees of the delusive phantom of false honour, one hour before, have said to each other, "LIVE, AND I WILL LIVE ALSO?"

Comm. Decatur was removed to his mansion house in Washington, languishing in the agony of approaching dissolution. A sudden and violent convulsion in nature could scarcely have produced a more agitating shock. Indeed the laws of *nature had been violated*, and one of its fairest works had been prostrated. Every object from those of the first magnitude, to those of the most trifling concern, were immediately abandoned, and every thought was intensely fixed upon the *living*—the *dying* DECATUR. Almost regardless of the forms which tender sensibility enjoins, when approaching the house of death and mourning, every one involuntarily rushed to the residence of the bleeding citizen, and hero, who but few hours before, gladdened their eyes by his presence.

The sublime and exalted contemplations of the hero's soul, were scarcely interrupted by the agony of his body. While *nature* was struggling to retain its agonizing grasp upon this world, his celestial spirit was panting for the regions of immortality : but his immortal soul was not summoned hence, until his lips pronounced his decided DISAPPROBATION OF THE MANNER IN WHICH HE FELL. *His* denunciation against DUELLING, was like a voice uttered from the tomb. DECATUR'S last faltering exclamations were a denunciation againist the DUELLIST.

His death left a chasm in the Navy which it might be presumptuous to say cannot be filled ; but which, it is confidently said, cannot be filled better. It produced a sensation in the metropolis, at the moment it was announced, and through the country as the saddening intelligence spread, which never had been experienced since the fall of HAMILTON, who like him, died in the

midst of his glory and usefulness, and who like him, acknowledged the guilt of the practice by which he fell.

During the gloomy interim between the 22nd and 24th of March, every possible demonstration of respect was paid to the remains of Comm. DECATUR, by the public authorities, and every condolence, which the deepest sympathy *could* afford, was extended to the inconsolable Mrs. Decatur.

The ardent affection and glowing patriotism of the eloquent JOHN RANDOLPH, led him to introduce a motion into the house of Representatives for the purpose of inducing a *formal* display of sorrow upon the occasion. It called forth the most unqualified eulogies upon the character of the deceased hero; but lest a recorded resolution, upon the subject of his funeral or badges of mourning might be construed into an approbation of the mode in which he died, it was deemed far more judicious to leave it to the spontaneous, and voluntary effusions of sorrowing hearts to manifest grief in a way the most appropriate to the melancholy occasion.

Upon the 24th, the metropolis was thronged by the largest concourse of the public authorities, civil, naval and military, foreign ministers, strangers of distinction, and citizens, that was ever witnessed there upon a similar occasion, since the corner stone of the Capitol was deposited, and the foundation of the city was laid.—The deepest sorrow was depicted upon every countenance—the great business of the Republic was suspended in every department. At 4 o'clock, the late residence of the deceased hero, was approached, and his

sacred remains were received by those who were to bear them to the tomb of KALORAMA. The Procession was thus appropriately arranged.

Funeral firing party of Marines, with music.
Officers of the Navy of the United States.
Officers of Marine Corps.
The Clergy.

| *Pall Bearers.* | | *Pall Bearers.* |
|---|---|---|
| Comm. Tingey, | CORPSE. | Comm. Rodgers, |
| Comm. Macdonough, | | Comm. Porter, |
| Gen. Jessup, | | Gen. Brown, |
| Capt. Ballard, | | Capt. Cassin, |
| Lieut. M'Pherson, | | Capt. Chauncey. |

Relatives.
President of the United States and Heads of Departments.
Members of the Senate and House of Representatives.
Judges, Marshal, and other Civil Officers of the United States.
Officers of the Army of the United States.
The Mayors and other Civil Officers of the District.
Foreign Ministers with their Suites, and Consuls of foreign powers.
The Citizens.

The military honours of the solemn occasion, were rendered by the truly excellent *Marine Corps*, under the orders of their accomplished commander, Major MILLER. As the procession began its solemn movement, minute guns from the *Navy Yard* were commenced; and were continued during the procession and funeral service. The same cannon which had so often announced the splendid achievements of DECATUR, now

marked the periods in bearing his remains from his late abode to the tomb. Their reverberating thunder mournfully echoed through the metropolis, and the surrounding region, and announced the approach of a sleeping hero to the silent cemetery. When the volleys of musketry echoed forth the last token of respect to the sacred reliques, it was known that all that was mortal of Decatur was concealed from human view,—that his body belonged to the earth—his exalted and immortal spirit to heaven, and his character, his fame and his glory to his country.

During these solemn and impressive ceremonies, Comm. Barron was languishing upon his couch with the wound received at the moment *that* was, which carried Comm. Decatur to the tomb; the thunder of the minute guns, and the discharge of musketry must have vibrated through a heart tortured to agony. *His* destiny was yet uncertain—he was upon the verge of *two* worlds, uncertain to which the next hour might consign him. He remembered that the living Decatur said to him:—"I HAVE NOT CHALLENGED, NOR DO I INTEND TO CHALLENGE YOU—YOUR LIFE DEPENDS UPON YOURSELF, AND NOT UPON ME." Can there be a pang in death more excruciating than his reflections must have been? He might have exclaimed with the bard:—

> "O! *Providence* extend thy care to me!
> For *Nature* sinks, unequal to the combat,
> And weak *Philosophy* denies her succours."

But Comm. Barron still survives; and survives it is confidently hoped, to be an ornament to the naval service, and a living witness against the horrid, the appalling custom, which hurried one of the most gallant

and noble spirits into eternity, and which brought *him* to the very verge of it. The conflict between the departed Decatur and the surviving Barron was no *common* affair of honour. It did not originate in the personal hostility of the parties—it was in the cause of the AMERICAN NAVY they fought each other ; and had the noble Decatur instantly *died*, the *wounded* Barron would have exclaimed in a faltering voice over his bloody and mangled corpse, as *Monmouth* did over *Percy's*:

> "Lie there, great heart---the earth that bears thee *dead*,
> Bears not *alive*, so high a gentleman."

DECATUR is dead—and if he must have died in the midst of his years and glory, would to heaven he had fallen upon his own deck, like LAWRENCE, ALLEN, and BURROWS ! Then might we exclaim in the language of a bard whose genius was as exalted as *his* heroism :—

> "———————— Sampson hath quit himself
> Like Sampson ;---and heroically hath finished
> A life heroic."

*The course of his life* points out a brilliant orb for the ocean-warriour to move in—*the manner of his death*, a destructive vortex to shun. But living, he was admired—dying, he was lamented, and his memory will be cherished in fond remembrance, as long as ardent patriotism, fearless courage and exalted virtues, shall receive an approving sentence in the human heart.

Hereafter, when the sculptured marble, or the towering monument, as imperishable as DECATUR's fame, shall point to the place where he rests from his toils and his dangers, the traveller will linger around it and

exclaim—Do we admire the American youth who devotes his early years to the acquisition of solid science, and polite literature? Such was DECATUR in youth. Are we charmed with the youthful hero, anxious to emulate the gallant deeds of noble ancestors? Such a *youth* was DECATUR. Do we admire the *man* who rises above effeminate enjoyment, and meets a host of enemies in foreign climes to rescue his countrymen from bondage? Such a man was DECATUR. Are we enraptured with the dauntless heroism of a warriour who dared to meet a foe whose power is deemed irresistible? Such DECATUR did. Do we admire the judge who dares to pronounce a sentence which may endanger himself? Such a judge was DECATUR. Are we tortured into the agony of grief that an exalted spirit should fall a victim to the delusive phantom of false honour? Alas! DECATUR so fell. "*What a fall was there, my countrymen!*"

The whole character of the subject of these biographical memoirs may be summed up in few words.

STEPHEN DECATUR was created and constituted for an ocean-warriour. His whole nature was peculiarly adapted to the perilous and brilliant sphere of action upon the watery element. That is the expanded theatre upon which he was designed to act the most important parts, and shine illustrious in the most tremendous scenes. To his natural adaptation for a seaman, he added all the auxiliary aids of scientific acquirement. He first made himself a general scholar—then a theoretical navigator—then a practical seaman. Before his *nautical skill*, the rolling and convulsed ocean lost half of its appalling horrours; and its hi-

deous tempests seemed to become subservient to his wishes.

But this important trait in his character, was almost forgotten in his more brilliant acquirement of *naval tactics.* He was the accomplished naval tactician. The most minute branches of naval science never escaped his attention, and the most important ones never exceeded his comprehension. The various manœuverings of a ship or a squadron, were as familiar with him, as the evolutions of an army to the scientific military officer. Whether encountering the enemy in the humble galley, or breasting the shock of battle in the majestic ship, he bore into action as if the Genius of Victory hovered over him, and gave him conquest in anticipation. When in the midst of an engagement, he fearlessly and undauntedly soared in columns of fire and smoke, and with the fury and velocity of lightning, charged upon the astonished foe. His own personal safety occupied not a single thought—his fearless soul was engrossed with the safety of his crew and his ship, and the destruction of the enemy. But the moment the thundering cannon ceased their terrific roaring, and the battle-fray was ended, he was changed into a ministering spirit of mercy. Over his slain enemy, he dropped a tear—to a wounded one he imparted consolation—he mingled his sighs with the groans of the dying, and rendered every honour to the gallant dead.

Whether encountering an overwhelming host of furious Turks, equally regardless of honourable combat, and thankless for favours after they wore conquered—or wresting victory from a more magnanimous and skill-

ful foe, he was ever the same—Terrible and fearless in battle—Mild and humane in victory.

As a *Naval Officer* he was as perfect a model, as the world afforded. To his superiours in rank he was respectful—to his equals generous and affectionate—to his inferiours mild, humane, and condescending—he was the seaman's friend. As a disciplinarian, he never spared himself, nor would he permit any under his command to be spared: but he had the peculiar felicity of rendering the severest duty the highest pleasure. He governed his men more by the respect and love he secured from them, than by the exertion of the power with which he was clothed. He infused into the bosoms of his officers and seamen, the noble and patriotic ardour which inspired his own exalted heart. They would follow him wherever he led, and would lead wherever he ordered. They were as true to him as their souls were to their bodies; and would suffer *them* to be separated before they would desert *him* in the hour of peril. When designated as a judge of the merits or demerits of his brethren in the naval service, his philanthropy led him to give full credit to their virtues in exalted or humble stations, while his stern integrity made him a dignified censor over their errors.

But however high he stood in his profession as a naval commander, it was in the mild and captivating scenes of peace, where he shone with unclouded lustre. His heart was the temple of benevolence—his mind was refined by literature and science—his deportment was that of the polished gentleman.

In his person, he was a little above the middling height, and rather delicately though elegantly formed.

His countenance was all expression. His eye discovered that inquietude which indicates an ardent mind; and although it beamed with benignity, it evinced an impatience for action. While his manly and dignified virtues commanded respect, the suavity of his manners invited to familiarity. His high sense of honour forbade him to inflict a wound upon *others;* and, with the majesty of virtue, to repel with indignation, the most remote suspicion of his *own* honour.

But his love of country was his crowning glory. His whole life was a commentary upon the noble sentiment of his noble ancestor.

'OUR CHILDREN ARE THE PROPERTY OF OUR COUNTRY.'

For his country he lived—for his country he fought—his countrymen will cherish and admire his memory, until the name of his country itself shall be extinguished in the final consummation of all things.

[The splendid "Naval Victories" achieved by Americans over Britons, in the second war between the American Republic and the British Empire, occasioned a great variety of "Nautical Songs," calculated for almost every variety of taste. None of the Naval Heroes called forth the effusions of the Muse with more rapture than STEPHEN DECATUR. The following production, except the 3rd verse, appeared soon after the capture of the MACEDONIAN. The elegant author* will excuse one prosaic verse for being introduced amongst his highly poetical ones.]

*Tune—"To Anacreon in Heaven."*

I. To the Court of Old Neptune, the god of the sea,
The sons of Columbia sent a petition,
That he their protector and patron would be;
When this answer arriv'd free from terms or condition:
"Repair to the sea;
"You conq'rors shall be;
"And proclaim to the world that Columbia is free:
"Beside, my proud trident DECATUR shall bear,
"And the laurels of Vict'ry triumphantly wear!"

II. The Tritons arose from their watery bed,
And sounding their trumpets, Æolus attended;
Who summon'd his Zephyrs, and to them he said,
"Old Neptune Columbia's cause has befriended.
"As the world you explore,
"And revisit each shore,
"To all nations proclaim the glad sound evermore;
"That DECATUR old Neptune's proud trident shall bear,
"And the laurels of Vict'ry triumphantly wear!"

* J. R. Calvert, Esq.

III. In that sea where the *Crescent* long proudly had
wav'd,
The sons of *Mahomet* the *Christians* enslaved ;
There DECATUR repair'd, and the Turk fiercely
brav'd,
And there from dire bondage the Christian he saved.
The Crescent soon bow'd,
'Fore his thunder so loud,
And his light'ning, resistless, dispell'd the dark cloud
Which *Allah's* disciples and demons had spread,
The terror of man—now no longer the dread.

IV. The Naiads, in chariots of coral so bright,
Skim'd swiftly the wide, liquid plane, quite enchanted !
Soon the proud Macedonian gladden'd their sight,
And DECATUR advancing, with courage undaunted ;
They saw with a smile,
The fast-anchor'd Isle,
Resigning the laurels obtain'd at the Nile !
And When Victory crown'd brave Columbia's cause,
The Trumpet of Fame shook the world with applause.

V. Dame Amphitrite flew to the Archives above,
To see the great mandate of Neptune recorded,
When tracing the records of Lybian Jove,
To find where renown to brave deeds was awarded ;
There WASHINGTON'S name,
Recorded by Fame,
Resplendent as light, to her view quickly came !
In raptures she cries, " Here DECATUR I'll place,
On the page which the deeds of brave WASHINGTON
grace !"

[The lamented and deplored death of Comm. Decatur, called forth numerous effusions of the pathetic and elegiac muse. The brilliant imagination and harmonious numbers of the following irregular ode, induces the writer to insert it in the conclusion of these memoirs. The reader will recollect that the eminence in the vicinity of the metropolis, called *Kalorama*, was the residence of the great Epic Poet of America, JOEL BARLOW—that he died in France when Ambassador—and that the body of Decatur was deposited in *his* family tomb.]

Methought I stood on Kalorama's height.
  Reclining, pensive, on Decatur's tomb,
When, lo! a form, divinely bright,
  Celestial glories beaming in her face,
Descends, while floods of light the dreary place illume!
  And thus addressed me, with a heavenly grace:—
"Say, youthful bard, whose humble name
Has never graced the rolls of Fame,
What brought thee to this sacred place,
And why the tear that trickles down thy face?
Say, hast thou sought these peaceful shades
To woo the lov'd Aonian maids,
Where, favored by the tuneful nine,
  His lyre great BARLOW strung,
And, with an energy divine,
  Immortal epics sung?
Alas! he sleeps upon a foreign shore—
The muses his sad fate deplore—
His lyre, that once so sweetly breath'd
But now with mournful cypress wreath'd
For ever slumbers, and is heard no more

Yet, mortal! know my name is FAME;
And to the world his merits I proclaim!
Or still more pious, hast thou come
To weep o'er brave DECATUR's tomb?
And dost thou shed the feeling tear
O'er his *reliques* that slumber here?"
'Tis true, said I; I here deplore
The gallant hero, now no more;
Who, like a youthful Hercules,
Subdued his savage enemies!
And who, at a maturer age,
Encounter'd Britain's hostile rage;
And dared with more than equal foes contend—
While *Victory* and *Fame* his glorious course attend—
And whose dread cannon shook Barbaria's shore,
While Algiers trembl'd at the thund'ring roar.
Alas! he slumbers with the dead;
The light'ning of his eye is gone!
And cypress wreaths entwine around that head,
Where Glory her bright hallo shed;
And darkness hovers o'er that face
Which beam'd with every social grace—
Where manly courage shone.
Nor does the muse alone
Decatur's fate bemoan;
But floods of sympathetic tears are shed:
Columbia mourns her hero dead,
With weeping eyes, and with dejected head;
And sable clouds of wo the nation overspread.
Scarce had I ceas'd, when thus the power again:—
"No more indulge thy pensive strain,

Thy grief is useless, and thy sorrows vain—
Rise, and behold his triumphs o'er the main!"
When on a craggy rock I stood,
Which overhung the ocean shore,
Beheld the tumult of the flood,
And heard the surges roar.
I saw two warlike ships engage,
With hostile fury and destructive rage;
And heard the cannon's thundering roar
Reverberate through rocks, and roll along the shore;
'Midst clouds of smoke the starry flag was seen,
Waving in triumph, o'er the dreadful scene;
While, shining through the battle's storm,
I saw the brave DECATUR'S form;
His arm, like lightning, dealt the fatal blow,
And hurl'd Columbia's thunders on the foe!
The battle's din no more is heard—
The scene of sorrow disappear'd.
When, lo! again my wondering eyes
Saw Fame's bright goddess glittering in the skies:
I heard her golden trump resound
With an immortal strain,
While bursts of glory flash'd around,
And brighten'd all the main:
"Hear, mortal, hear! the wonders thou has seen
Give but a glimpse of his immortal fame;
I might display a more expanded scene,
And with new glories grace Decatur's name!
But thou couldst not endure the dazzling sight—
For how can mortal eyes sustain such heavenly light?"

But hark! I hear a louder sound,
  Like peals of thunder, bursting on my ear;
While all the listening nations round,
  The immortal praises of DECATUR hear!

RECAPITULATION.—Squadrons, Ships, Sloops of War, Brigs, Schooners and Gun Boats, in which STEPHEN DECATUR *served* or *conquered*: the time when, the capacity in which, and in what Wars.

| Yrs. | *Names of Ships and Office.* | *Duty and Achievements.* | *In what wars. Commanders, &c. &c.* |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1798 | *Frigate* U. States, Midshipman and Lieutenant. | Studying the *Theory* of Naval Tactics, and reducing it to *Practice*. | With the FRENCH REPUBLIC. |
| 1799 | *Br.* Norfolk, 1st. Lieut. | Practising and teaching *Naval Discipline*. | Com. Truxton. " Decatur. |
| 1800 | *Frigate* U. States, Lieutenant. | Disciplining Crew---Convoying Merchantmen---Chastising Frenchmen. | Capt. Little. " Tryon. " Barry. |
| 1801 | *Frigate* Essex, 1st. Lieutenant | MEDITERRANEAN. Disciplining Crew, in Naval Tactics and Nautical skill; arousing their courage. | With TRIPOLI. Comm. DALE. |
| 1802 | *Frigate* New York, 1st. Lieutenant. | Disciplining crew, teaching Naval gunnery, police of the ship, &c. &c. Returned to America in the Chesapeake. | Com. MORRIS. *Sterrett.* PREBLE. |
| 1803 | *Brig* Argus, Lt. Com'dt. | Disciplining crew, teaching tactics, nautical skill, modes of attack, &c. &c. | Lt. Stewart. PREBLE. |
| " | *Schooner* Enterprise, Lt. Com'dt. | *Attacked* and *captured* Tripolitan corsair, and two distinguished commanders, named the captured vessel KETCH INTREPID, Dec. 23rd. | |
| 1804 | *Ketch* Intrepid, 70 men, 4 guns, Lieut. Com'dt. | Boarded, and captured Frigate Philadelphia, of 54 guns, 750 men. Killed 30, wounded 120, and *burned* the ship, under Bashaw's battery and castle! Feb. 16th. [*none killed.*] | *Lawrence.* *Morris, jr.* *Macdonough.* |

| Y'rs | Names of Ships and Office. | Duty and Achievements. | In what wars. Commanders, &c. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1804 | *Division of Gun-Boats.* Senior Officer. | In No. IV. 1 gun, charged 9 gun-boats of 3 guns and 40 men each. Captured an enemy's large boat, bearing out his prize--*James Decatur* treacherously slain. Returned to the combat, with a Midshipman and 8 men, captured the Turk's boat who slew his brother, and shot him dead. In both prizes 33 officers and men slain--Lost not a man. Aug. 3. | With TRIPOLI.<br>PREBLE.<br>Somers, &c.<br>Macdonough.<br>J. Decatur.<br>Henley. |
| " | *Frigate* Constitution, Captain. Rank from Feb. 16th. | Crew *disciplined* by PREBLE, and needed no more *disciplining*. Blockading enemy, and awaiting *negociation* on shore. | Trippe.<br>J. Bainbridge.<br>Com. BARRON |
| " | *Frigate* Congress. Captain. | Blockading enemy, and awaiting negociations at the Bashaw's palace. Returned to America upon conclusion of Tripolitan war. | |
| 1805 | Superintendant of American Gun-boats. | Teaching the peculiar discipline for Gun-Boats; modes of attack, singly or in squadron. | Peace, or "War in Disguise." |
| 1807 | *Frigate* Chesapeake and the Southern Squadron. COMM. | Cruising on the American coast; watching foreign armed ships, and enforcing acts of Congress. | |
| 1811 | *Frigate* U. States. | Preparing for what might come; visiting ports, &c. &c. | |
| 1812 | *Frigate* U States Captain. | *1st Cruise.* Sailed in a Squadron commanded by Comm. Rodgers. *2nd Cruise.* Captured H. B. M. Frigate Macedonian, 49 guns, Oct 25. | GREAT BRITAIN.<br>Hull.<br>Jones.<br>Rodgers. |

| Yrs. | Names of Ships and Office. | Duty and Achievements. | In what wars, Commanders, &c. |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1813<br><br><br><br><br><br>1814 | SQUADRON.<br>Frigates U. States, Macedonian, Sloop of War Hornet. | *3rd Cruise.*<br>Driven into New London Harbour, by a superior British Squadron, and blockaded; attempts an *escape*; *Challenges* enemy; examines Steam-boat; impressed seamen, &c. &c. &c. | Bainbridge.<br>Lawrence.<br>Stewart.<br>Porter.<br>Perry.<br>Macdonough. |
| 1815 | SQUADRON.<br>Frigate President.<br>Sl's. of War, Hornet, Peacock. | *4th Cruise.*<br>Beat the Frigate *Endymion*, and surrendered to the whole British Squadron; Jan. 15, returned on parole. | Chauncey.<br>Burrows.<br>Allen.<br>Biddle.<br>&c. &c. |
| 1815 | SQUADRON.<br>Frigates Gurriere, Macedonian, Gonstellation.<br><br>Sl's. of War Ontario, Epervier.<br><br>Schooners Flambeau, Spark, Spitfire, Torch. | MEDITERRANEAN.<br>Captured Algerine Frigate *Masouda*; killed Hammida, and 29 men *June* 17<br>Captured Alg. Br. 22 g. 19<br>Arrived at *Algiers* 28<br>Made a Treaty 30<br>Ar. at Tunis, demand. $46,000 as indemnification *July* 31<br>Arrived at Tripoli, demanded $25,000 Aug. 9<br>Arrived at Messina, repaired, left captives 20<br>Arrived at Naples Sept. 2<br>Communicat. with the king 8<br>Arrived at Gibraltar, and joined Comm. Bainbridge 18<br>Arrived in America Nov. 12 | BARBARY POWERS.<br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br>Bainbridge. |
| 1815 | Navy-Commissioner. | Arranging affairs of Navy with Navy Department, designating officers, &c. &c. | |
| 1820 | Single Combat. | Died March 22, in defending the honour of the American Navy. | |

The following is a List of the Navy-Commissioners. The accomplished Comm. CHARLES STEWART, it will be perceived, fills the place of the ever-to-be lamented Comm. STEPHEN DECATUR.

JOHN RODGERS,
CHARLES STEWART,
DAVID PORTER.

The following is a List of the Post Captains in the American Navy—a constellation of ocean-warriours, naval tacticians, and accomplished gentlemen, unequalled in the Universe.

Alexander Murray,
John Rodgers,
James Barron,
William Bainbridge,
Thomas Tingey,
Charles Stewart,
Isaac Hull,
Isaac Chauncey,
John Shaw,
John H Dent,
David Porter,
John Cassin,
Samuel Evans,
Jacob Jones,
Charles Morris,
Arthur Sinclair,
Thomas McDonough,
Lewis Warrington,
Joseph Bainbridge,
William M. Crane,
James T. Leonard,
James Biddle,
Charles G. Ridgley,
Robert T. Spence,
Daniel T. Patterson,
Samuel Angus,
Melanchton T. Woolsey,
John Orde Creighton,
Edward Trenchard,
John Downes,
John D. Henley,
Jesse D. Elliott.

*Names and force of the Vessels of the United States.*

| *Ships of the Line.* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Names* | *Guns* | *Names* | *Guns* |
| Independence | 74 | New-Orleans | 74 |
| Washington | 74 | North-Carolina | 74 |
| Franklin | 74 | Ohio | 74 |
| Columbus | 74 | Delaware | 74 |
| Chippewa | 74 | One building at Boston | 74 |
| | | One at Portsmouth | 74 |

| *Frigates.* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Constitution | 44 | Jones | 18 |
| United States | 44 | Madison | 18 |
| Gurriere | 44 | Louisiana | 18 |
| Java | 44 | Niagara | 18 |
| Superior | 44 | Linnet | 16 |
| One building at Washington | 44 | Sylph | 16 |
| Constellation | 36 | Ticonderoga | 14 |
| Congress | 36 | Oneida | 14 |
| Macedonian | 36 | Queen Charlotte | 14 |
| Confiance | 32 | Ranger | 14 |
| Mohawk | 32 | Enterprise | 12 |
| Cyane | 28 | Spark | 12 |
| John Adams, corvette | 24 | Eagle | 12 |
| General Pike, do. | 24 | Nonsuch | 6 |
| Saratoga | 22 | Surprise | 6 |
| Steam Frigate Fulton, at New-York | | Lynx | 5 |
| *Sloops of War, &c.* | | Hornet | 5 |
| Lawrence | 20 | Fox | 4 |
| Erie | 18 | Despatch | 2 |
| Peacock | 18 | Ghent | 1 |
| Ontario | 18 | Lady of the Lake | 1 |
| Hornet | 18 | Porcupine | 1 |
| Detroit | 18 | Alert | none |
| Jefferson | 18 | Corporation | — |

*Bombs*—Ætna, Vesuvius, and Vengeance.

## POSTSCRIPT.

From that inadvertence which often occurs to the writer of an original work, composed of a great diversity of facts and incidents, it was stated in the sixth chapter of this volume, that Lieut. Decatur returned to America in the frigate New-York, as 1st Lieutenant. The fact was not so.

While the American squadron rendezvoused at the island of Malta, an altercation arose between the officers of his Britannic Majesty, and of the American squadron. Amongst other consequences flowing from it,

it occasioned the death of a British officer. The government of the island interposed its authority; and it was found expedient for all the Americans concerned in the affair, to return to America. First Lieut. Decatur, of the frigate New-York, therefore, returned as a *passenger* in the frigate Chesapeake.

Conclusive evidence is furnished of the propriety of Comm. Decatur's concern in that "Affair" by the fact that he was shortly afterwards placed in the command of the *Argus*, the *first* armed ship in which he was *first* in command. In that ship, he soon after returned to the Mediterranean—took command of the Enterprize, and went on "conquering and to conquer" until the Genius of Victory claimed him as her favorite son.

The unhappy controversy between Comm. Perry and Capt. Heath, is known to every reader, and by every reader who considers the Navy as the grand pillar of the American Republic, most sincerely lamented. The reason for alluding to it in this place is, because it was omitted in the proper place in the preceding volume. Comm. Decatur, in this controversy, evinced the exalted sentiments of his noble heart. Perry and Heath could not be reconciled without an "appeal to arms." A "meeting" was agreed upon, on the "field of Honour." Comm. Decatur was selected by Perry as his *second;* a term sometimes denominated, *friend.* Comm. Decatur felt as if Perry was the *original* aggressor, however much he might have disapproved of the unrelenting and vindictive spirit of Heath. By his persuasion, Perry concluded to *receive* the fire of his antagonist, and *reserve* his own. Heath's fire did not take effect. The noble, the anxious Decatur then approached the combatant, and noncombatant; and, in the sublime character of a "Peace Maker," effected a reconciliation. Little do those who tauntingly exclaim—"*Decatur died as the fool dieth,*" know the native, and practical goodness of his heart. To be sure he closed his invaluable life in single combat—a combat which he did not seek, but which his exalted sense of honour forbade him to avoid.