

BARNES JAMES

YANKEE SHIPS AND
YANKEE SAILORS: TALES
OF 1812

James Barnes
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Sailors: Tales of 1812

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*Yankee Ships and Yankee Sailors: Tales of 1812:**

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PREFACE

In presenting this volume of "Tales of 1812" it is not the intention of the author to give detailed accounts of actions at sea or to present biographical sketches of well-known heroes; he wishes but to tell something of the ships that fought the battles, whose names are inseparably connected with a glorious past, and to relate incidents connected with the Yankee sailors who composed their crews – "A Yankee Ship and a Yankee Crew" – thus runs the old song; it is to exploit both in a measure that is the intention of this book. Brave fellows, these old-time Jackies were. Their day has gone by with the departed day also, of the storm-along captains, the men who carried sail in all sorts of weather, who took their vessels through dangerous passages unmarked by buoys, with only the fickle wind to drive them, who sailed into the enemy's cruising-grounds, and counting on the good Yankee pine and live oak, had perilous escapes and adventures which fiction cannot exaggerate. It stirs one's blood to read of these. Surely, it will not arouse a hatred for by-gone

enemies, to hark back to them.

The incidents made use of in the following pages are historical, or at least authentic – some may perhaps come under the head of tradition. Tradition is historical rumor; it may be proved by investigation to be actual fact, or it may be accepted at its face value, on account of its probability. To investigate, one is led to break open and dissect and sometimes we destroy a wealth of sentiment in the proceeding; by casting aside tradition that is harmless we destroy the color of history; we may lose its side lights and shadows that give vividness and beauty to the whole effect. It has not been a spirit of research into the science of history, or a chance for deep delving into figures and records, that has animated the author, although he has drawn upon state papers for material, and all correspondence and important references can be vouched for. He has endeavored to refreshen the colors by removing the dust that may have settled. He has touched the fragile bric-a-brac of tradition with the feather duster of investigation. There is sufficient excuse for everything that is written in this book. Facts are not lacking to prove much here to be true. It will not confuse our historical knowledge to accept it thus.

We can draw accurate conclusions as to what kind of men these fine old fellows were; how they looked; how they spoke and acted. Their deeds are part of the nation's record, and their ships exist now in the shape of a few old hulls. We can mark how carefully and strongly they were constructed; we can imagine

them swarming with men and quivering beneath the thunder of broadsides. The author has tried to put the sailor back upon his ship again. Here we have the old tales now retold; retold by one who loves to listen to them, therefore to talk about them. This is his prologue to the telling, and that is all there is to it.

ALLEN, OF THE *CHESAPEAKE*

Give a ship an unlucky name, and it will last throughout the whole of her career. A sailor is proverbially superstitious, and he clings jealously to tradition.

It is told that when the frigate *Chesapeake* was launched she stuck fast on the ways, and did not reach the water until the following day, which was Friday. Although she was a fine vessel to look at, she grounded upon the bar upon her first attempt to sail, and, when once free, behaved herself in such a lubberly fashion that those who witnessed her starting out declared she was bewitched. Even after many changes had been made in the length of her masts, in the weight of spars, and the cut of sails, still she was considered by many a failure. And, although her sailing qualities improved as time went on, yet her bad name stuck to her, as bad names will.

Given this drawback, the unlucky captain of such a craft finds it difficult to recruit a proper crew, and must often be content with green hands, or the riffraff disdained by other ships' masters.

Commodore James Barron, who had been ordered to the *Chesapeake*, was a brave officer. He had succeeded the peppery Commodore Preble in command of the fleet that had so successfully negotiated the operations before Tripoli, and there he had won for himself a name and reputation. Nevertheless, he

was not entirely popular with his officers. They failed to find in him the graciousness of manner and deportment, the strict adherence to the lines of duty, and yet the kindness of thought and conduct that distinguished young Captain Bainbridge; and they missed, strange to say, the iron hand and stern rule of Preble, the martinet.

Just before sailing from the Capes to relieve the *Constitution* on the Mediterranean station, the *Chesapeake* had recruited, from Delaware and Maryland, a green crew. Not above fifty of her complement were men-of-warsmen. Perhaps one hundred more had seen service in deep-sea craft, and had made long cruises; but the rest, numbering probably one hundred and fifty, were longshoremen or landsmen. Lying inside the mouth of Chesapeake Bay were several British men-of-war. As was usual when in American ports, they were compelled to watch their crews most closely, for the higher pay and the better treatment, which cannot be denied, had tempted many an impressed seaman to leave his ship, and take refuge under the American flag.

It was claimed by Vice-Admiral Berkeley in command of the English fleet, that four British sailors had deserted from the *Melampus*, and joined Barron's frigate. The following correspondence passed between Robert Smith, the Secretary of the Navy at Washington, and Commodore Barron, in relation to the matter. It explains in the best way possible, how affairs stood at the outset.

Washington, April 6, 1807.

To Commodore James Barron: —

Sir: It has been represented to me that William Ware, Daniel Martin, John Strachan, John Little, and others, deserters from a British ship of war at Norfolk, have been entered by the recruiting officer at that place for our service. You will be pleased to make full inquiry relative to these men (especially, if they are American citizens), and inform me of the result. You will immediately direct the recruiting officer in no case to enter deserters from British ships of war.

Robt. Smith.

To this letter Commodore Barron made haste to reply, and the following is taken *verbatim* from his note to the Secretary: —

"William Ware was pressed from on board the brig *Neptune*, Captain Crafts, by the British frigate, *Melampus*, in the Bay of Biscay (in 1805)... He is a native American, born at Bruce's Mills, on Pipe Creek, in the county of Frederick, Maryland, and served his time at said mills. He also lived at Ellicot's Mills, near Baltimore, and drove a waggon several years between Hagerstown and Baltimore. He also served eighteen months on board the U.S. frigate, *Chesapeake*, under the command of Captain Morris and Captain J. Barron. He is an Indian-looking man.

"Daniel Martin was impressed at the same time and place; a native of Westport, in Massachusetts, about thirty miles to the eastward of Newport, Rhode Island; served his time out of New York with Captain Marrowby of the *Caledonia*; refers to Mr. Benjamin Davis, merchant, and

Mr. Benjamin Corse, of Westport. He is a colored man.

"John Strachan, born in Queen Ann's County, Maryland, between Centreville and Queenstown; sailed in the brigantine *Martha Bland*, Captain Wyvill, from Norfolk to Dublin, and from thence to Liverpool. He then left the vessel and shipped on board an English Guineaman; he was impressed on board the *Melampus*, off Cape Finisterre; to better his condition he consented to enter, being determined to make his escape when opportunity offered; he served on board said frigate two years; refers to Mr. John Price and – Pratt, Esq., on Kent Island, who know his relatives. He is a white man, about five feet seven inches high.

"William Ware and John Strachan have protections.¹ Daniel Martin says he lost his after leaving the frigate.

"John Little, *alias* Francis and Ambrose Watts, escaped from the *Melampus* at the same time, are known to the above persons to be Americans, but have not been entered by my recruiting officer."

The foregoing proves beyond all manner of doubt what ground Commodore Barron had in taking the stand he did further on in the proceedings. But Admiral Berkeley was a very proud, obstinate man. His feelings had been hurt by the refusal of the Yankee commodore to give up his men, and he bided his time.

On Monday, June 22, 1807, the *Chesapeake* put to sea with her ill-assorted and undisciplined crew. In the harbor of Lynnhaven lay the British squadron under the command of

¹ Papers proving their American citizenship.

Commodore Douglass, acting under the orders of Vice-Admiral Berkeley. It consisted of the *Bellona*, seventy-four, the *Triumph*, seventy-four, the *Leopard*, fifty, and the *Melampus*, thirty-eight. Why it was that the *Leopard* was selected for the work which was to follow, is easy to surmise. Vice-Admiral Berkeley had determined, at all hazards, to search the American vessel to ascertain if she had in her complement those "British seamen" who had deserted from the fleet. Barron's refusal to allow a search made of his vessel while she was in port had been backed up by the United States Government. This had exceedingly exasperated the English commander, and he determined to wait until the *Chesapeake* was at sea before putting his cherished project into practice. As soon as the *Chesapeake* set sail, the *Leopard* was despatched to bring her to. The *Melampus* was not sent because she was too near the *Chesapeake's* armament, and resistance might be successfully made to any attempt at high-handed interference. Nor did he take the trouble to despatch one of his seventy-fours, which might have brought the *Chesapeake* under her guns, and compelled her to submit by the law that "might makes right"; but the *Leopard* was sent because she was just large enough to insure success, and yet to humble the American from the mere fact that he must inevitably yield to a vessel to which he should by rights make some resistance.

It was a calm day with just enough wind to move the ships through the water. The *Leopard*, that had really got under way first, overhauled the smaller vessel, after a few hours' sailing. At

three o'clock, when forty-five miles off shore, she hove to across her bows, and the slight wind that had wafted them from the Capes died away almost at the moment. Hailing the American ship's captain, Humphreys stated that he would like to send despatches by her – a privilege always accorded one friendly nation by another.

On the *Chesapeake's* deck, chatting with the officers, were two lady passengers, who were bound with four or five gentlemen passengers for the Straits. Part of the cabin had been allotted to the use of the ladies and their maids. As they had come on board at a late hour, their trunks and luggage were yet on the deck. Amicable relations existed between America and England, and there was nothing especially unfriendly in the attitude of the English frigate, although her action excited much comment on board the ship, and gave rise to many surmises. Captain Barron was on the quarter-deck, when news was brought to him that the *Leopard* had lowered a boat with an officer in it, and that it was making for the *Chesapeake's* side. The ladder was dropped, the side boys were piped to the gangway, and Barron himself stepped forward to greet the Lieutenant, extending his hand and welcoming him graciously. Standing close by was Dr. John Bullus, a passenger, the newly-appointed consul to the Island of Minorca, and the naval agent to the United States naval squadron in the Mediterranean.

"Captain Humphreys' compliments," began the Lieutenant. "And he requires the privilege of searching this vessel for

deserters."

"What are their names, may I ask?" inquired Barron.

The officer replied, reading from a list he carried in his hand, but describing the men as subjects of "His Majesty, King George."

When he had finished, Barron frowned.

"There has been a careful and full inquiry into the cases of these seamen," he said at last, "and after a minute investigation into the circumstances, the British Minister, Mr. Erskine, is perfectly satisfied on the subject, inasmuch as these men were American citizens, impressed by officers of the *Melampus*. This gentleman," turning to Dr. Bullus, "our naval agent, is particularly acquainted with all the facts and circumstances relative to the transaction. He received his information from the highest possible source."

"From none less than the Honorable Robert Smith, the Secretary of our Navy," put in Dr. Bullus, "and I am most willing to go on board the *Leopard* and inform your commander to that effect, Mr. Erskine –"

"I do not recognize Mr. Erskine in this business," interrupted the young Lieutenant arrogantly. "Nor do I wish to talk with any one but Captain Barron. There is much more to be said."

Barron took the doctor to one side. "You will pardon me for placing you in a position to receive such an insult. I did not suppose it possible."

"Make no mention of it," was the return; "I understand." With

that the agent walked away.

The Englishman could not have helped noticing the confusion upon the American's decks. The crew were engaged under the direction of the petty officers in coiling away the stiff, new running-gear and cables, men with paint-pots and brushes were touching up the bulwarks and paint work; others were polishing the brass; and it was altogether a peaceful scene that struck his eye, even if the presence of the ladies had not added the finishing touch.

On the quarter-deck, leaning carelessly against the railing, was a young officer, Lieutenant William Henry Allen, third in rank. He was but twenty-three years of age, a tall, boyish-looking fellow, with beautiful features, clear eye and complexion, and ruddy cheeks. He noticed the glance the English officer had given, and his face clouded. He was near enough to hear what passed between Barron and the Lieutenant.

"It is of such importance," went on the latter, continuing his previous remarks, "that I should desire to speak to you in private, sir. If we could but retire to your cabin – "

"With the greatest pleasure in the world," Barron returned, indicating that the Lieutenant should precede him; and with that they disappeared from view. Once seated at the cabin table, the Englishman broached the subject without preamble.

"Commodore Douglass," he began, "is fully determined to recover the deserters that are now harbored on board this ship. It is my desire to warn you that it is best that you submit to

a peaceable search, and in return my commanding officer will permit you to do the same, and if any of your men are found in our complement, you are welcome to take them with you. This should bear great weight in helping you to form your decision. Here is his letter."

Captain Barron took the paper, broke the seal, and read as follows: —

The Commander of H.B. Majesty's ship, "Leopard," to the Captain of the U.S. ship, "Chesapeake":—

At Sea, June 22d, 1807.

The Captain of H.B. Majesty's ship, *Leopard*, has the honor to enclose the Captain of the U.S. ship, *Chesapeake*, an order from the Honorable Vice-Admiral Berkeley, Commander-in-chief of His Majesty's ships on the North American Station, respecting some deserters from the ships (therein mentioned) under his command, and supposed to be now serving as part crew of the *Chesapeake*.

The Captain of the *Leopard* will not presume to say anything in addition to what the commander-in-chief has stated, more than to express a hope that every circumstance respecting them may be adjusted in a manner that the harmony subsisting between the two countries may remain undisturbed.

"As I before remarked," said the Lieutenant, noting that Barron had finished the letter, "Captain Humphreys offers you the privilege of a mutual search."

Captain Barron smiled. The idea that he should find any of

his own men serving on board King George's vessel was rather amusing.

"I have missed none of my crew," he said quietly, "and, while grateful for the privilege, I do not desire to make use of it."

"And your answer?" broke in the Lieutenant.

"You will take this letter, that I shall write, to Captain Humphreys, give him my best compliments, and of course inform him that I regret that I can neither avail myself of his courtesy, nor with honor can I permit a search to be made of my vessel."

"As you decide," returned the Lieutenant, sententiously.

For some minutes nothing was heard from the cabin. Barron was busily employed in inditing the epistle, and when it was delivered, the two officers came out together.

The following is a copy of the letter to Captain Humphreys:—

*To the Commander of His Majesty's ship, "Leopard":—
At Sea, June 22d.*

I know of no such men as you describe. The officers that were on the recruiting service for this ship were particularly instructed by my government through me not to enter any deserters from H.B. Majesty's ships. Nor do I know of any being here. I am also instructed never to permit the crew of any ship under my command to be mustered by any other than their own officers. It is my disposition to preserve harmony, and I hope this answer to your despatch will prove satisfactory.

J. Barron.

The Englishman was escorted to the side, and once in his boat, his crew, as if urged to special exertion, made all haste to gain their ship.

Allen turned and spoke to Benjamin Smith, the First Lieutenant. "I do not like the look of things," he said.

"Nor I," responded Smith, advancing toward the Captain, who had stopped to speak to one of the lady passengers. He saluted his commander, and speaking in a low voice, he suggested the propriety of asking the ladies to retire below, and of clearing ship.

"Tut, tut," replied Barron, carelessly; "you are over-nervous, Mr. Smith. My letter to Captain Humphreys will convince him that our actions are perfectly proper and peaceable, while any movement to prove to the contrary might lead him to suppose that I wished to precipitate some trouble. Nothing will occur, I warrant you."

"Had we not better open the magazines, sir?" asked Captain Gordon, coming up at this moment.

"It is not necessary," Barron returned, and once more joined the ladies.

The keys of the magazine are always kept in the possession of the ship's captain, and by him they are handed to the gunner, and are never delivered to any one else. As was customary, the *Chesapeake's* broadside guns were loaded and shotted, for a ship generally sailed with them in this state of preparation; but they were not primed, and but thirteen powder horns had been made

ready, and they were locked safe in the magazine. Around the foremast and in the cable tiers were plenty of wads and sponges, and ready on deck, before each gun, was a box of canister. But there were no matches prepared for service.

The peaceful work went on. The crew continued touching up the paint work, and in the sunlight the brass shone brightly. From the galley came the clatter of dishes, and from below came the sound of a sea-song, chanted by one of the men off watch.

Barron called Captain Gordon to him on the quarter-deck. "Captain," said he, "I think that fellow yonder hailed us a moment since; I could not make out what he said however. Perhaps we had better send the men to their stations quietly."

"Very good, sir," returned the Captain, and he strolled forward leisurely, for he, like Barron, suspected no surprise.

Allen had left the quarter-deck and had stepped forward to speak to Mr. Brooks, the sailing-master. They stopped at the entrance to the galley, which was in a caboose or deckhouse. Suddenly Lieutenant Smith looked out across the water at the *Leopard*, that was swinging lazily along at about the distance of a pistol shot.

Surely he could not be mistaken. The muzzle of one of the forward guns was slewing around to bear upon the ship. Probably they were just exercising; but there! another followed suit, and then three more, as if moved by one command. His face blanched. What could it mean? But one thing! He whirled and saw that Barron had gone below to his cabin. Rushing to the

ladies, he grasped them by the arms and having hardly time to make explanations, he hurried them to the companionway.

"Below as far as you can go! Down to the hold!" he cried. "Don't stop; don't talk!"

As he spoke he could scarce believe his eyes. A burst of white smoke, with a vivid red dash of flame from the centre, broke from the forward gun on the *Leopard's* main deck. There was a crash just abaft the break of the forecastle. A great splinter fully six feet long whirled across the deck. The shock was felt throughout the ship. A man who had been painting the bulwarks fell to his knees, arose, and fell again. His shoulder and one arm were almost torn away; his blood mingled with the paint from the overturned pot. He shrieked out in fright and agony.

"Beat to quarters!" roared Lieutenant Smith.

Up from below the men came tumbling. Barron ran from his cabin, with his face as white as death. "To quarters!" he roared, echoing the Lieutenant's order.

Everything was confusion. The men gathered at the useless guns. The belated drummer began to sound the roll. Hither and thither rushed officers and midshipmen. The green hands stood gawking about; some overcome by fear and the suddenness of danger, plunged down the companionway. Where were the matches? Where were the priming horns? Barron turned to go to his cabin for the keys to the magazine. They were locked in the drawer of his heavy desk, and now there came another shot. It struck fair in the bulwarks, and the hammocks and their contents

were thrown out of the nettings. Three men were wounded by the shower of splinters. And not a shot was fired yet in return.

"Matches! give us the matches!" roared some of the men at the guns, as they tried to bring their harmless weapons to bear upon the Englishman.

A deadly broadside struck the helpless *Chesapeake*. Blocks and spars fell from aloft. Suddenly from the entrance of the deckhouse ran a hatless figure. Men made way for him. It was Lieutenant Allen! His jaws were set and his eyes were glaring. Tossing between his hands, as a juggler keeps a ball in the air, was a red hot, flaming coal.

"Here, sir!" cried one of the gunner's mates. "This one's primed, sir. For God's sake, here, sir!"

Just as Allen reached forward, a shot from the *Leopard* struck the opening of the port. The man who had spoken was hit full in the breast. Five of the eight surrounding the piece fell to the deck, wounded by the murderous splinters. But Allen dropped his flaming coal upon the breech of the gun, and pushed into place with his scorched and blackened fingers.

It was the lone reply to the Englishman's dastardly gun practice! For fifteen minutes the *Leopard* fired steadily by divisions.

Covered with blood that had been dashed over him from the body of the man the round shot had killed, Allen ran aft. The ship was full of groans and shrieks and cursing. Forth from the cabin came Barron. He looked an aged, heart-broken man. When

he saw the young Lieutenant, he stepped back a pace in horror. The scene of carnage on the deck unnerved him.

"The keys! the keys!" shrieked Allen, almost springing at his commander's throat. "Let us fight, if we must die!"

The thought that flashed through Barron's mind must have been the uselessness of resistance, the terrible death and destruction, and the inevitable loss that would be sure to follow. Almost resting himself upon the group of officers, he raised both hands above his head, the palms open and outstretched.

"Haul down the flag!" he ordered faintly.

A sailor, standing near by, caught the words and springing to the halliards, down it came, tangling almost into a knot, as if to hide its folds. The *Leopard* ceased her murderous work; but the confusion was great on board the *Chesapeake*. Men wept like babies. Wounded men were being carried below. Curses and imprecations on the English flag and on the distant ship rent the air. Many openly cursed their own commander.

"Tell him to come here, and look at this!" cried an old sailor, pointing to one dead body on the deck. "Then will he lower the flag? Give us a chance, for God's sake, to fight like men!"

Barron had hurried into the cabin.

"Send for the officers of the ship." They were all there to a man, except the surgeon, who was busy down below. "Your opinions, gentlemen," he faltered. There was not a sound. Captain Gordon was silent. Tears were rolling down the First Lieutenant's cheeks. He tried to speak, and could not.

"Sir, you have disgraced us!"

It was Allen speaking. To save his life he could not have helped blurting out what he felt to be the truth. Barron spread out his arms weakly, then dropped his head into his hands. It was then presumed that he was wounded also, for blood was running down his wrists. They left him there.

What use the rest of the story? The search was made, four men were taken. All claimed to be Americans; they were prepared to prove it. Captain Humphreys refused to accept the surrender of the vessel. Barron, hitherto known as brave and capable, was dishonored and relieved from all command, was sentenced to five years retirement without pay. Oh yes, the British Admiral was sentenced also. Of course the Board of Admiralty could not recognize such doings. They even made apologies and all the rest of it, and returned two of the men, all there were left, for one was hanged and another died. They sentenced their Vice-Admiral with a smile of covert approval, and they promoted him shortly afterwards.

The unfortunate officers who had been innocent parties to the surrender felt keenly their position. They could not go through explanations to every one. They became morbidly sensitive upon the subject. No less than seven duels grew out of the affair, and Allen, who had fired the gun, wrote to his father thus: "If I am acquitted honorably, if Captain Barron is condemned, you may see me again. If not, never." – Poor Allen! No disgrace shall ever be attached to his name. He died of wounds received while

bravely fighting on the deck of his own little vessel, the *Argus*, some years later, and he was buried in foreign soil by a guard of honor of his enemies, who appreciated his bravery and worth.

As for the *Chesapeake*, her bad name clung to her. And of her end, there is much more to tell that will be told. But "Remember the *Chesapeake*" became a watchword. This was the beginning, that was the beginning of the end.

REUBEN JAMES, ABLE SEAMAN

This is a story that has oft been told before. But in history, if a man becomes famous by one act, and be that act something worth recording, it will stand being told about again. So if this be an old yarn, this is the only apology for the spinning, and here goes for it: —

Reuben James may be well remembered by men who are yet living, for he died but some fifty years ago. He was born in the state of Delaware, of the good old "poor but honest" stock. Sailor boy and man was Reuben, with a vocabulary limited to the names of things on shipboard and the verbs to pull and haul. He went to sea at the age of thirteen years, and in 1797, when only a lad of sixteen, although he had already made three or four cruises of some length, he was captured by a French privateer during the quasi-war between this country and the citizen Republic of France. Upon his liberation, Reuben made up his mind to serve no longer in the merchant service, but to ship as soon as possible in the best frigate that flew our flag; and as his imprisonment lasted but some five or six months, he soon found opportunity for revenge. Upon returning to the States he was fortunate enough to find the old *Constellation* in port picking up her crew. This was in the year 1799, and the old ship was then in command of the intrepid Commodore Truxtun, and he was her commander when she gave such a drubbing to

the French frigates *Insurgente* and *Vengeance*, which taught the citizens a lesson, and brought to an end, as much as any other thing, the ridiculous situation of two nations not actually at war fighting one another at sea whenever they met. In these actions young James distinguished himself. He was by nature fearless to the verge of recklessness, and he was probably in trouble, on account of his devil-may-care propensities, more than once. In 1804, he sailed in the frigate *United States* to the Mediterranean, and when young Stephen Decatur sailed into the harbor and successfully destroyed the captured frigate *Philadelphia*, which the Tripolitans had anchored beneath their batteries, Reuben James was one of the first to volunteer. He returned from the successful accomplishment of the design, impressed with the young leader's courage and magnetism, and as often is the case between a beloved officer and the man who serves under him, there grew up in the young sailor's heart – he and Decatur were about the same age – a wild desire to do something to prove his devotion. The affection of brave men for one another leads to deeds of noble self-sacrifice, and Reuben James's chance was to come. Every time that he was assigned to boat duty in the many skirmishes and little actions, before the harbor of Tripoli, Reuben succeeded in going in Decatur's boat, and one day to his delight he was promoted to be cockswain, which must have proved that Decatur's keen eye had noticed him.

On the 3d of August, 1804, early in the morning, the orders were sent throughout Commodore Preble's fleet to prepare for

a general attack to take place as soon as it was broad daylight. The American force consisted of the *Constitution* and a number of gunboats of the same style and size as those composing the Tripolitan forces. Everything was ready on time, but the lack of wind prevented the action from taking place until late in the afternoon, when the *Constitution*, preceded by three of the American gunboats, entered the harbor. There were nine of the Bey's crack vessels, composing the eastern wing, waiting not far from shore. The three Yankee gunboats bore down upon them without hesitation, in gallant style. In slap-bang fashion, they sailed right into the Tripolitans and captured, cutlass in hand, the three leading ones. The other six fled and came plashing up the harbor, working their heavy sweeps for all they were worth.

A few minutes after their retreat, one of the other vessels that, to all appearances, had surrendered, broke away and started up the harbor, scrambling along as fast as she could go. Decatur in his small boat was not far away. There was a mist of battle smoke hanging over the water, and for an instant he did not notice what was going on; but when he did hear what had happened, all the fierce daring in his nature was aroused, and mingled with the anger and desire for revenge, it completely swept him away. He was told that the Tripolitan commander, who had just made his escape, had treacherously risen upon the prize crew sent on board of him, after he had struck his flag, and with his own hands had killed Decatur's beloved brother James. When this news reached him, Decatur did not falter.

"After him!" he cried to his crew. "Put me alongside of him!"

"We'll put you there, sir," said Reuben James, who was at the tiller. And out of the smoke into the plain view of the guns of the battery and also of the American captives, who had viewed the whole affair from the window of their prison, the little boat started in the wake of the felucca, whose force of men outnumbered hers by three to one. They gained at every jump, and in a few minutes they had run their little boat alongside, thrown down their oars, and to a man had scrambled on board the Tripolitan. Decatur had set his eye upon a red-turbaned figure that he knew to be the leader. This man had killed his brother! Almost before the bowman had laid hold of the enemy's gunwale, he had made a flying leap off it and gained the deck. Ignoring every risk, scarcely pausing to ward off the many blows that were aimed at him, he made straight for the man in the red turban. The pirate was armed with a long spear and one of those deadly curved scimitars, sharp as steel can stand it, capable of lopping off a limb at a single stroke; drawing back he aimed a full-length thrust as soon as Decatur confronted him, for he must have read his fate in the determined look on the latter's face. Decatur dodged skilfully and tried to come to closer quarters; but the Tripolitan by great agility succeeded in keeping out of the way, and once more he lunged. This time as Decatur parried his sword-blade broke off at the hilt; dropping it, he laid hold of his enemy's spear, and in the wrestle for its possession, he succeeded in tripping up the Turk, and both fell upon the deck. The red-

turbaned one, freeing one hand, drew a dagger from his waist-cloth, and just as he was about to plunge it into the body of the young American, Decatur managed to draw a small pistol, and lifting himself on his elbow, blew off the top of his opponent's head.

Revenge was his. But what about our friend Reuben? The only reason that Decatur had not been killed in the early part of the struggle by the many blows that were aimed at him – for the American boarding party numbered but twelve all told – was the fact that seaman Reuben James was close behind him, warding off blow after blow. Disdaining to protect himself, his right arm was rendered useless, so that he had to shift his cutlass to his left hand. He was slashed seven times about the body. A cut on the shoulder made him drop his weapon, and just at this moment he saw that Decatur was lying upon the deck with his foeman over him. Behind him a sinewy man was aiming a deadly blow directly downward. Reuben James sprang forward. His right arm was useless and his left almost so. There was nothing he could interpose between that deadly blow and his beloved commander but his life! Trying weakly to push back the Tripolitan, he leaned forward swiftly and caught the blow from the scimitar on his own head. It fractured his skull, and he fell insensible to the deck.

But a Yankee sailor is a hard man to kill – in three weeks cockswain James was at his post again. His recovery was no doubt due to his wonderful constitution and his youth.

As soon as the war with Great Britain was declared, Reuben

made all haste to join his old commander, and he served in the frigate *United States* when she captured the *Macedonian*, and afterwards in the *President* when she took the *Endymion*. In both actions he got as near Decatur as he could, and in the last-named conflict he received three wounds. Although suffering greatly, he refused to leave the deck until after the *President* had struck her flag to the squadron that captured her, whereupon Reuben James was carried below weeping – not from pain or anguish, but from sheer mortification and grief.

At Decatur's funeral he wept again, honest fellow, and whenever he came to port he would visit his commander's grave. Reuben was in actual service until the year 1836, when he arrived in Washington for the purpose of obtaining a pension. He was suffering very much at this time from an old musket-shot wound that had caused a disease of the bone of his leg. It was exceedingly painful and becoming dangerous. After consultation the doctors ordered amputation, and as he lay in the hospital the decision was announced to him. With his old indifference to danger, and his reckless spirit, Reuben replied in the following words: —

"Doctor, you are the captain, sir. Fire away; but I don't think it is shipshape to put me under jury masts when I have just come into harbor."

The day after the operation Reuben was very low, and it was thought that he had but a few hours to live. The old sailor himself declared that he had reached the bitter end of his rope, appeared

resigned to his fate, and begged the surgeon to "ease him off handsomely while he was about it."

"Reuben," said the doctor, "we have concluded that we will give you a good drink and allow you to name it. What will you have, brown stout or brandy toddy?"

"I s'pose I won't take another for a long time, sir," Reuben responded, with a twinkle in his eye. "So just s'pose you give us both; which one first it doesn't much matter."

He prided himself that he had been in ten fights and as many "skrimedgeds," and as he was a favorite character, he was allowed to celebrate each in turn as they came around, so his happy days were many. There was one subject to which, however, no one could ever refer – Decatur's sad and untimely end. Always in his heart Reuben bore a deep and lasting love, and an ever-living admiration for the man whose life he had saved; and those friends of the young Commodore always treated the old sailor with the greatest of deference. Had Decatur lived, it is safe to state that wherever he went Reuben would have gone also, and if the latter had not walked bare-headed and weeping at his officer's funeral; and had it been the other way about, with Reuben being put to earth, Decatur would have been there, if possible, hat in hand, to shed a tear of sorrow.

THE MEN BEHIND THE TIMES

Out of the north they came in their grimy, bluff-bowed ships – the men behind the times! Three years away from home; three years outside the movement of human government, of family life, ignorant of the news of the world.

The years 1811 and 1812 were remarkable ones in the annals of the whaling industry; vessels that had been cruising for months unrewarded managed to fill their holds, and now, deep laden, they were returning from the whaling grounds, singly or often in companies of a half-score or more. They were ugly vessels, broad and clumsy, with heavy spars and great wooden davits. They stench of blubber and whale oil, and they oozed in the warm sun as they labored southward, out of the realms of ice and night into the rolling waters of the Pacific. They buffeted the tempestuous weather of the Horn and climbed slowly northward along the coasts of the Western hemisphere.

Sailing together homeward bound for New England in the fall of the year was a fleet of these Arctic whalers – no matter their exact number or their destinations. For the beginning, let it suffice that the vessel farthest to the west was the good ship *Blazing Star* of New Bedford.

Captain Ezra Steele, her skipper, had made a mental calculation, and he knew exactly the profits that would accrue to him from the sale of the barrels of sperm oil that now filled

the deep hold of his ship. It was his custom in fine weather to count these barrels and to go over all these calculations again and again. He was a part owner of the *Blazing Star*, and he had made up his mind exactly what he was going to do with the proceeds of this cruise. He knew that just about this time of the year, his wife and many other wives, and some who hoped to be, would be watching for the sight of welcome sails. The Captain wondered if his daughter Jennie would accept young Amos Jordan's offer of marriage. He and Amos had talked it over. Amos was his first mate now, and the Captain had been thinking of staying at home and sending the young man out in command of the *Blazing Star's* next cruise; but perhaps Jennie, who had a will of her own, had married; or who knows what might have occurred? It is now late October of the year 1812, and a great deal can happen in three years, be it recorded.

Captain Ezra had all the sail that she could carry crowded on the stiff, stubby yards of his vessel. He was anxious to get home again, but the wind had been baffling for some days, hauling about first one way, then another. Now, however, they were getting well to the north, and the continued mildness of the air showed that probably they had entered the waters of the Gulf Stream. The Captain was dressed in a long-tailed coat and yellow cloth breeches thrust into heavy cowhide boots that had become almost pulpy from constant soaking in the sperm oil. He noiselessly paced the deck, now and then looking over the side to see how she was going.

The old *Blazing Star* creaked ahead with about the same motion and general noise of it that an oxcart makes when swaying down a hill. From the quarter-deck eight or ten other vessels, every one lumbering along under a press of stained and much-patched canvas, could be seen, and a few were almost within hailing distance. All were deep laden; every one had been successful.

"Waal," said the Captain to himself, "if this wind holds as 'tis, we'll make Bedford light together in about three weeks."

The nearest vessel to the *Blazing Star* was the old *Elijah Mason*. She had made so many last voyages, and had been condemned so many times, and then tinkered up and sent out again, that it always was a matter of surprise to the worthy gentlemen who owned her when she came halting along with her younger sisters at the end of a successful cruise. Her present captain, Samuel Tobin Dewey, who had sailed a letter of marque during the Revolution, was a bosom friend of Captain Steele. Many visits had they exchanged, and many a bottle of rare old Medford rum had they broached together. As Captain Ezra turned the side, he saw that they were lowering a boat from the *Elijah Mason*, and that a thick, short figure was clambering down to it. So he stepped to the skylight, and leaning over, shouted into the cabin.

"Hey, Amos!" he called, "Captain Dewey's comin' over to take dinner with us. Tell that lazy Portugee to make some puddin' and tell him to get some bread scouse ready for the crew. We'll keep

'em here for comp'ny for our lads."

In a few minutes he had welcomed Captain Dewey, who, although almost old enough to remember when his ship had made her maiden voyage, was ruddy and stout in his timbers and keen of voice and eye. But by the time that a man has been three years cooped up in one vessel, his conversational powers are about at their lowest ebb; every one knows all of the other's favorite yarns by heart, and so the greeting was short and the conversation in the cabin of the *Blazing Star* was limited. It was with a feeling of relief that the captains heard the news brought to them by a red-headed, unshaven boy of seventeen, that there was a strange sail in sight to the northwest. The two skippers came on deck at once. About four miles away they could make out a vessel heaving up and down, her sails flapping and idle. For, a common occurrence at sea, she lay within a streak of calm. Her presence had probably been kept from being known before by the slight mist that hung over the sea to the west and north. The long, easy swells were ruffled by the slight wind that filled the sails of the whaling fleet, and were dimpled to a darker color. But where the stranger lay there was a smooth even path of oily calm. Beyond her some miles the wind was blowing in an opposite direction. She lay between the breezes, not a breath touching her.

"What d'ye make her out to be, Ezra?" asked Captain Dewey, his fingers twitching anxiously in his eagerness to take hold of the glass through which Captain Steele was squinting.

"Man-o'-war, brig," responded the taller man. "Sure's you're

born, sir."

"You're jest right," responded Dewey, after he had taken aim with the telescope. "I'll bet her captain's mad, seein' us carryin' this breeze, an' she in the doldrums. We'll pass by her within three mile, I reckon. She may hang on thar all day long an' never git this slant of wind at all. Wonder what she's doin aout here, anyhow?"

In about ten minutes Captain Ezra picked up the glass again. "Hello!" he said. "By Dondy! they've lowered away a boat, an' they are rowin' off as if to meet us. Wonder what's the row?" A tiny speck could be seen with the naked eye, making out from the stretch of quiet water. The crew of the *Blazing Star* had sighted her also, and at the prospect of something unusual to break the monotony, had lined the bulwarks. Suddenly as the boat lifted into the sunlight on the top of a wave, there came a flash and a glint of some bright metal. In a few minutes it showed again. Captain Ezra picked up the glass.

"By gum!" he exclaimed; "that boat's chuck full of men all armed. What in the name of Tophet can it mean?"

"Dunno – I'd keep off a little," suggested Captain Dewey.

The helmsman gave the old creaking wheel a spoke or two in response to the Captain's order.

"She's baound to meet us anyhow," put in the lanky skipper. "What had we better dew?"

"Got any arms on board?" inquired Dewey. "Look suspicshus. Think I's better be gettin' back to my old hooker," he added half

to himself.

Amos Jordan, the first mate, was standing close by. "I reckon we've got some few," he said.

"Git 'em aout," ordered the Captain, laconically; "and, Cap'n Sam, you stay here with us, won't ye?"

Amos started forward. In a few minutes he had produced four old muskets, and a half-dozen rusty cutlasses. But there were deadlier weapons yet on board, of which there were a plenty. Keen-pointed lances, that had done to death many a great whale; and harpoons, with slender shanks and heads sharp as razors. And there were strong arms which knew well how to use them. The Captain went into the cabin and came back with three great, clumsy pistols. One he slipped under his long-tailed coat, and the two others he gave to Captain Dewey and Amos Jordan. There were twenty men in the *Blazing Star's* own crew. The visitors from the old whaler added five more, and with the three mates and the two captains, five more again. In all there were thirty men prepared to receive the mysterious rowboat, and receive her warmly should anything be belligerent in her mission.

"I dunno what they want," said Captain Ezra; "but to my mind it don't look right."

"Jesso, jesso," assented Captain Samuel.

A plan was agreed upon; a very simple one. The men were to keep well hid behind the bulwarks, and if the small boat proved unfriendly, she was to be warned off the side, and if she persisted in trying to board, then they were to give her a proper reception.

The suspense would not be long. The boat was now so close that the number of men in her could be counted distinctly. There were eighteen in all, for the stern sheets were seen to be crowded. The brig at this moment lay in her own little calm, about two miles directly off the starboard beam. The rest of the whaling fleet had noticed her, and had sighted the approach of the armed cutter also. They were edging off to the eastward, evidently hailing one another and huddling close together. But the *Blazing Star*, with just enough wind to move her, held her course.

All was suppressed excitement, for the armed small craft was now within a half a cable's length. "Ship ahoy!" hailed an officer in a short, round jacket, standing up. "Heave to there; I want to board you!"

"Waal," drawled Captain Ezra, through his nose, "I dunno as I shall. What d'ye want?"

There was no response to this; the officer merely turned to his crew: "Give way!" he ordered, and in half a dozen strokes the cutter had slid under the *Blazing Star's* quarter. The man in the bow turned and made fast to the main chains with a boat-hook. Captain Steele was smoking an old corncob pipe. He looked to be the most peaceful soul in the world as he stepped to the gangway, but under his long coat-tails his hand grasped the old horse-pistol. Several heads now showed above the bulwarks. The strange officer, who had evidently not expected to see so many, hesitated. Captain Ezra blew a vicious puff of smoke from between his firm lips.

"Better keep off the side," he said; "we don't want ye on board; who be ye, anyhow?"

"Damn your insolence, I'll show you!" cursed the stranger. "On board here, all you men!" He sprang forward. Captain Ezra did not pull his pistol. He stepped back half a pace and his eye gleamed wickedly. The unknown had almost come on board when he was met full in the chest by the heel of Captain Ezra's cowhide boot. Now the Captain's legs were very long and strong, and aided by the firm grasp he had on both sides of the gangway, the gentleman in the round, brass-buttoned jacket flew through the air over the heads of his crew in the boat below and plumped into the water on the other side. One of the men in the boat instantly drew a pistol and fired straight at the Captain's head – the ball whistled through his old straw hat! But that shot decided matters. It was answered by the four old rusty muskets, the last one hanging fire so long that there was a perceptible time between the flash in the pan, and the report. Two men fell over on the thwarts of the small boat. The man who had fired the pistol sank back, pierced through and through by the slender shank of a harpoon. But the crowning effect of this attempt to repel boarders occurred just at this minute. A spare anchor, that had been on deck close to the bulwarks, caught the eye of Amos Jordan. "Here, bear a hand!" he cried, and with the help of three others he hove the heavy iron over the bulwarks. It struck full on the cutter's bows, and crushed them as a hammer would an eggshell. The shock threw most of the occupants from off the

thwarts; the boat filled so quickly that in an instant they were struggling in the water – one man gained the deck, but a blow on the head from the butt of Captain Dewey's pistol laid him out senseless. One of the *Mason's* crew hurled a lance at one of the helpless figures in the water. It missed him by a hair's-breath.

"Avast that!" roared Captain Ezra. "We don't want to do more murder!"

The officer who had been projected into the deep by the Captain's well-timed kick had grasped the gunwales of the sunken boat. His face was deathly white; thirteen of his crew had managed to save themselves by laying hold with him. One of them was roaring lustily for some one to heave a rope to him. To save his life, Captain Ezra could not help grinning.

"Waal," he said, "this is a pretty howdy do. Ye kin come on board naow, if ye want tew, only leave them arms whar they be." As if in obedience to this order, a sailor in a blue jacket with a white stripe down each arm and trimming the collar, unbuckled his heavy belt with his free hand and cast his cutlass far from him. Two others followed suit.

"Naow," said Captain Ezra, "one at a time come on board, an' we'll find aout whar ye mean by attackin' a peaceable whaler with dangerous weapons, whos homeward baound an' hain't offended ye."

The first man up the side was a red-cheeked, black-whiskered individual, who mumbled, as he sheepishly gazed about him: "Douse my glims but this is a bloody rum go."

"Tie 'im up," ordered Captain Ezra. The man submitted to having his hands made fast behind his back.

"Now for the next one," said Captain Ezra, blowing a calm puff of smoke up in the air, and watching it float away into the hollow of the mainsail. In turn the thirteen discomfited sailors were ranged along the bulwarks, and no one was left but the white-faced officer, clinging to the wreckage of the boat that was now towing alongside, for one of the crew had heaved a blubber-hook into her, at the end of a bit of ratline.

"Spunky feller, ain't he?" suggested Captain Ezra, turning to Captain Dewey, who, in the excitement had taken two big chews of tobacco, one after another, and was working both sides of his jaws at once. "The last t' leave his sinkin' ship. That's well an' proper."

The young man – for he was scarcely more than thirty – needed some assistance up the side, for Captain Ezra's boot-heel had come nigh to staving in his chest.

"Naow, foller me, young man," Captain Ezra continued, walking toward the quarter-deck. He ascended the ladder to the poop, and the dripping figure, a little weak in the knees, guarded by a boat-steerer armed with a harpoon, obeyed and followed. As the Captain turned to meet him he noticed that the man in uniform still had his side-arms.

"I'll trouble you for that thar fancy blubber-knife, young man," he said, "an' then I'll talk t' ye." The officer detached his sword from his belt and handed it over. He had not offered yet to say

a word.

"Naow," said Captain Ezra, holding the sword behind his back, "who be ye, an' what d' yer want? as I observed before."

"I'm Lieutenant Levison of His Majesty's brig *Badger*."

"Waal, ye ought to be ashamed of yourself," broke in Captain Ezra.

"I am," responded the young man. "You may believe that, truly."

"Waal, what d'ye mean by attackin' a peaceful whaler?"

"Why, don't you know?" replied the officer, with an expression of astonishment.

"Know what?"

"That there's a war between England and America?"

"Dew tell!" ejaculated Captain Steele, huskily, almost dropping his pipe. He stepped forward to the break of the poop.

"Captain Dewey," he shouted, "this here feller says thar's a war."

"So these folks have been tellin'," answered the Captain of the *Elijah Mason*; "but I don't believe it. They're pirates; that's what they be."

"Gosh, I guess that's so," said Captain Ezra. "I reckon you're pirates," turning to the officer. "I hain't heard tell of no war."

"We are not pirates," hotly returned the young man. "Damn your insolence, I'm an officer of His Britannic Majesty, King George!"

"Tush, tush! no swearin' aboard this ship. What was you goin' "

to do, rowin' off to us?"

The officer remained silent, fuming in his anger. "I was going to make a prize of you; and if I had you on board ship, I'd – "

"Belay that!" ordered Captain Ezra, calmly. "Ye didn't make a prize of me, an' you're aboard my ship. Don't forgit it."

"Well," broke in the young man, angrily, "what are you going to do with me?" Captain Dewey had by this time come up on the quarter-deck, followed by the mates.

"I presume likely," said the skipper of the *Blazing Star*, rather thoughtfully, "I presume likely we'll hang ye."

The Englishman – for all doubts as to his nationality were set at rest by his appearance and manner of speech – drew back a step. His face, that had grown red in his anger, turned white again, and he gave a glance over his shoulder. The brig, hopelessly becalmed, lay way off against the horizon.

As he looked, a puff of smoke broke from her bows. It was the signal for recall. He winced, and his eye followed the glance of the stalwart figure with the harpoon that stood behind him.

"For God's sake, don't do that!" he said hastily. "I tell you, sir, that there is a war. There has been war for almost four months now. Upon my word of honor."

The two captains exchanged looks of incredulity. Suddenly the prisoner's face lit up. "I can prove it to you," he said excitedly. "Here is a Yankee newspaper we took from a schooner we captured off the Capes five days ago."

"*The New Bedford Chronicle*, by gosh!" exclaimed Captain

Ezra, in astonishment, taking the soaked brown package. He spread it out on the rail.

"It's true, Cap'n Sammy, it's true," he continued excitedly. "Thar's a war; listen to this," and he read in his halting, sailor manner, the startling headlines: "The Frigate *Constitution* Captures the British Frigate *Guerrière*. Hurrah for Hull and his Gallant Seamen! Again the Eagle Screams with Victory."

There was much more to it, and Captain Ezra read every word. "Young man," he said at last, "I owe ye an apology. If ye'll come daown into our cabin, I kin mix ye a toddy of fine old Medford rum. Between lawful an' honest enemies there should be no hard feelin's, when the fate of war delivers one into the hands of 'tother. Cap'n Sammy," he observed as he reached the cabin, "if we had really knowed thar was a war, we'd a gone back and took that thar brig."

"Yaas," returned Captain Dewey, "we be summat behind the times."

His eyes twinkled as he glanced out of the cabin window. Still becalmed and almost hull down, H.M.S. *Badger* was but a speck against the horizon.

The Englishman drew a long deep breath.

"Come, sir," spoke up Captain Ezra. "Don't get down hearted. 'Live an learn,' that's my motto. We're drinkin' your good health, sir, join right in."

When the *Blazing Star* arrived in port, she turned over to the United States authorities an officer and twelve men, prisoners of

war.

THE COWARD

He said that he had been impressed into the English service from the brig *Susan Butler*, of New York. But what grounds the boarding officer had taken in supposing him to be a British subject would puzzle most. The cocked-hats generally left a merchant vessel's side with the pick of the unfortunate crew. The qualifications necessary for a peaceable Yankee merchant sailor to change his vocation and become a servant of King George were plain and simple in 1810: ruddy cheeks – crisp curling hair – youth, health, and strength, why! of English birth and parentage most certainly! What use the papers stating that his name was Esek Cobb, or Hezekiah Brown? His home port or natal town Portsmouth, N.H., Bath, Me., or Baltimore? He spoke the mother tongue; he was an A.B. His services were needed to fight old England's enemies, and away he would go in the stern sheets of the press boat, bitter curses on his lips and irons on his wrists.

But this straight-haired, Indian-featured, narrow-shouldered half-man who stood there on the *Constitution's* deck, with his soaked, scanty clothes, clinging to his thin, big-jointed limbs, why in the name of the Lion or the Unicorn, or the Saint or the Dragon, for that matter, had they chosen him? He told his tale in a low, whimpering voice, with his eyes shifting from one deck-seam to another – Five years in the Royal British Navy! –

Five years of glorious service of the one who rules the common heritage of all the peopled earth – Five years of spirit-murdering slavery.

Not six cable-lengths away, a dark shape against the lights of the town, lay the great ship from whose side he had lowered himself in the darkness to swim to the shelter of the smart, tall-sparred frigate, over whose taffrail he had watched his country's flag swinging in the sunlight, tempting him all the day. He had fought against the swiftly running tide until at last – just as his strength had left him – he had been hauled on board by the anchor watch, and now his one prayer was that they would not give him up. The men who stood about looked pityingly at his shivering figure. A midgy, attracted by the commotion, had hastened aft to find the officer of the deck. The forecandle people murmured among themselves.

"Captain Hull won't give you up, lad," said one, laying his hand on the poor fellow's shoulder.

"This ship is not the *Chesapeake*," said another; "don't ye fear, man."

"Here's the Lieutenant," put in another – "tention!"

"What's going on here?" asked a low voice.

The sailor who had last spoken touched his cap.

"I was down making the running-boat fast to the boom, sir, when I hears a faint cry, and I sees a man in the water just alongside, sir. I lays hold of him, and thinkin' it's one of our crew, sir, we gets him quietly at the forechains; then we sees as how he

ain't one of us, sir, – he says."

"That'll do; let him speak for himself. Where did you come from, my man?"

"From the *Poictiers*, yonder, sir. For the sake of mercy don't give me up!"

"Are you an American?"

"Yes, sir; God's truth, I am."

"Your name?"

"McGovern, sir."

"Where were you born, McGovern?"

The stern, matter-of-fact inquiry could scarce conceal the pity in the tone; but it was the officer-voice speaking.

"In Water Street, New York, sir, not far from the big church – Oh, for the love of –"

"You speak like an Irishman."

"My parents were Irish, your honor, but I was born in the little house fourth from the corner. You won't let them – Oh, God help me!"

The sturdy rocking beat of oars near to hand off the port quarter caused an interruption. The fugitive gave a quick glance full of terror in the direction of the sound; then he dropped forward upon his knees; his whimpering changed to a hoarse weeping whisper.

"Don't give me up; I'd rather die – save me – save me," he croaked.

One of the watch came hurrying aft. "There's a cutter here at

the gangway," he said in a low voice, saluting the Lieutenant.

"Very good, my lad," responded the latter. "Take this man below, give him dry clothes and a place to sleep."

Two men helped the abject creature to his feet and led him sobbing to the forward hatchway. The Lieutenant stepped to the side.

"On board the cutter there," he called, "what do you want at this hour of night?" Well he knew, and he spoke as if the answer had been given.

"On board the frigate," was the reply. "We're looking for a deserter; he started to swim off to you; has he reached here?"

The Lieutenant disdained deception. "We fished a half drowning man out of the water a few minutes since," he replied quietly, leaning over the gangway railing.

"He's a deserter from my ship; I'll be obliged if you will hand him over. – This is Lieutenant Colson, of the *Poictiers*."

"Sorry not to grant Lieutenant Colson's request; the man claims protection as an American. Captain Hull will have to look into the matter. – This is Lieutenant Morris, of the *Constitution*."

"I should like to see Captain Hull at once. In bow there, make fast to the gangway."

"Hold hard, sir. The Captain is asleep; I cannot waken him."

"I demand you do – you are in one of His Majesty's ports."

"I know that well enough – keep off the side, sir." There was a moment's silence, and then the same level tone was heard addressing some one on the deck. "Call the guard; let no one

come on board the ship to-night."

There was the sound of some movement on the *Constitution's* deck; the fast ebb tide clapped and gurgled about the vessel's counter mirthfully. The Englishman, standing erect in the stern sheets of the little cutter bobbing against the frigate's side, hesitated.

"On board the frigate, there!"

"Well, sir, in the cutter!"

"Heark'ee! You'll repent this rashness, I can warrant you that, my friend; you will pay high for your damned Yankee insolence, mark my words. Shove off there forward" (this to the bowman) – "shove off there, you clumsy fool! Let fall!"

There had been no reply from the bulwarks to the Englishman's burst of temper; but Lieutenant Morris stood there drumming with his fingers on the hilt of his sword, and looking out into the darkness. Then an odd smile that was near to being scornful crossed his face, and he turned quietly and began the slow swinging pace up and down the quarter-deck. That Captain Hull would sanction and approve his conduct, he did not have the least suspicion of a doubt; if not on general principles, on account of a certain specific reason – to be told in a few short words: —

It had happened that three days previous to the very evening, a steward, who had been accused of robbing the ward-room mess of liquor, and incidentally of drunkenness arising from the theft, was up for punishment – somehow he had managed to take French leave by jumping out of a lower port. He had been

picked up by the running-boat of the flagship. At once he had claimed to be a subject of King George, and, needless to record, the statement was accepted without question – whether he was or not bore little weight, and cuts no figure in this tale. Suffice it: Captain Hull's polite request for the man's return was laughed at, very openly laughed at, and the Admiral's reply was a thinly veneered sneer – why, the very idea of such a thing!

Now here was a chance for that soul-satisfying game of turn and turn about. Lieutenant Morris, as he paced the broad quarter-deck, felt sure he had voiced Captain Hull's feelings, and then he began a little mental calculation, and as he did so, slightly quickened his stride, and came a few paces further forward until he was opposite the port gangway. There he stopped and looked out at the swinging anchor lights. Six hundred odd guns against forty-four! And then there were the land batteries and the channel squadron probably outside. But actually, what mattered the odds? On the morrow there was going to be something to talk about, that was fact, and Lieutenant Morris smiled as brave men do when they look forward to contest, and know they have right with them. The poor, whimpering dog who had claimed protection was probably not worth his salt, and was certainly not needed; but rather than give him up, Isaac Hull would go to the bottom (in his very best, brand-new uniform, Morris knew that well enough), and with him would go four hundred sturdy lads by the right of their own manly choice.

"And egad they'd have company," Morris reasoned out loud,

with that strange smile of his.

Captain Hull heard the news and all about it at breakfast, and the only sign that it interested him in the least was the fact that he rubbed his heavy legs in their silk stockings (he generally wore silk in port) contentedly together beneath the table, and disguised a wide smile with a large piece of toast.

"Have the man given a number and assigned to a watch, Mr. Morris," was his only comment to the Lieutenant's story.

That was simple enough. But the heavy, red-faced Commodore, although prone to extravagant indulgence in expansive shirt frills, jewelry, and gold lace, usually went at matters in the simplest manner and after the most direct fashion. There did not appear to be any question on this present occasion; he to all appearances dismissed the subject from his mind; but Morris knew better – "Wait," said he to himself, "and we will see what we will see." And although this is the tritest remark in the world, it was more or less fitting, as will be shortly proved.

At nine o'clock a letter arrived from the English Admiral. It was couched in the usual form, it was full of "best compliments," and bristled with references to "courtesy and distinguished conduct in the past," and it was signed "Obd't servant." But it said and meant plainly enough: "Just take our advice and hand this fellow over, Captain Hull, – right away please, no delay; don't stop for anything. He deserves to be abolished for presuming that he has a country that will protect him."

The word had flown about the decks that the English cutter

was alongside with a message from the flagship. The crew had all tumbled up from below, and a hum of voices arose from the forecabin.

"Bill Roberts, here, he was on watch when they hauled 'im on board, warent ye, Bill? – I seed him when they brought 'im below – he had the shakes bad, didn't he, Bill?" The speaker was a short, thickset man, who had a way of turning his head quickly from side to side as he spoke. His long, well-wrapped queue that hung down his back would whip across from one shoulder to the other.

"We thought it was one of yesterday's liberty party trying to get back to the ship," responded the man addressed as Bill. "But when we got him on deck we seed as how he warent one of us, as I told the First Luf. Did you see his back, Tom, when we peeled his shirt off?"

"God a' mercy! I seed it."

Well those marks were known. Deep red scars, crisscrossed with heavy, unhealed, blue-rimmed cuts, feverish and noisome.

"He was whipped through the fleet ten days ago. So he says. I don't know what for, exactly; says he found a midshipman's handkerchief on deck, and not knowin' whose 'was, put it into his ditty box – some such yarn. – Jack here, he tells of somethin' like that, when he was impressed out of the *Ariadne* into the old *Southampton*, don't ye, Jack?"

"Yes, but damn the yarn – this fellow – where is he now?" asked a tall, light-haired foretopman, around whose muscular throat was tattooed a chain and locket, the latter with a very red-

cheeked and exceedingly blue-eyed young person smiling out through the opening in his shirt.

"He's hidin' somewhere down in the hold, I reckon," answered a little, nervous man; "nobody could find him this morning; guess he's had all the spunk licked out of him."

"I've heard tell of that before," remarked the tall foretopman. "His spirit's broke."

Just at this moment the English Lieutenant who had borne the message from the Admiral hurried up from the cabin where he had been in consultation with Captain Hull. His face was very red, and he gave a hasty glance at the crowded forecabin, as if trying to enumerate the men and their quality. Then he hastened down the side, and when he had rowed off some dozen strokes he gave the order to cease rowing. Then standing up he looked back at the frigate he had left, taking in all her points, the number of her guns, and marking her heavy scantling with a critic's eye. Then he seated himself again, and pulled away for the flagship.

His departure had been watched by four hundred pairs of eyes, and this last act of his had not been passed by unnoticed.

"Takin' our measure," observed Bill Roberts, cockswain of the Captain's gig, turning to Tom Grattan, the thickset, black-headed captain of the maintop. The latter grinned up at him.

"There'll be the Divil among the tailors," he said.

The tall foretopman, who was standing near by, folded his heavy arms across his chest.

"We'll have some lively tumbling here in about a minute, take

my word for that, mates," he chuckled, "or my name's not Jack Lange"; and as he spoke, Captain Hull, followed by all of his lieutenants, came up on deck. The Captain turned and spoke a few words to Mr. Cunningham, the ship's master. The latter, followed by three or four midshipmen, hurried forward. Some of the men advanced to meet him.

"All of you to your stations," he ordered quietly. "Gunners, prepare to cast loose and provide port and starboard main-deck guns. The rest stand by ready to make sail if we get a wind off shore."

He gave the orders for the capstan bars to be fitted, and turning to the ship armorer he told him to provide cutlasses and small-arms for the crew.

Quietly boarding-nettings were made ready to be spread, the magazines were opened, even buckets of sand were brought and placed about; sand to be used in case the decks became too slippery from the blood. Down in the cockpit the doctor had laid out his knives and saws on the table. In five minutes the *Constitution* had been prepared for action. And all this had been accomplished without a sound, without a shouted order or the shrilling of a pipe!

Captain Hull inspected ship. Silent, deep-breathing men watched him as he passed along. At every division he stopped and said a few words. "Lads, we are not going to give this man up upon demand. Remember the *Chesapeake*. We are going to defend ourselves if necessary, and be ready for it." He made the

same speech in about the same words at least half a dozen times. Then he went into his cabin and donned his best new uniform, with a shining pair of bullion epaulets. This done, he gave a touch to his shirt frills before the glass and went on deck.

Signals were flying in the British fleet, and now the forts were displaying little lines of striped bunting. There was scarce breeze enough to toss them in the air. The sleepy old town of Portsmouth looked out upon the harbor. Soon it might be watching a sight that it never would forget. Perhaps history would be made here in the next few minutes, and all this time the fugitive lay cowering among the water-butts in the mid-hold.

A breeze sprang up by noon, and the two nearest vessels of the fleet, a thirty-eight-gun frigate, and a razee of fifty, slipped their moorings and came down before it. A hum of excitement ran through the Yankee ship. There was not sufficient wind to move her through the water; but the capstan was set agoing, and slowly she moved up to her anchor. As the smaller English vessel drifted down, it was seen that her men were at quarters. It was the same with the razee. But without a hail they dropped their anchors, one on each side of the *Constitution's* bows, at about the distance of a cable's length. There they waited, in grim silence. The men made faces at one another, and grimaced and gestured through the open ports. The officers, gathered in groups aft, paid no attention to their neighbors.

There followed more signalling. A twelve-oared barge left the flagship for the admiralty pier. From the direction of the town

came the sounds of a bugle and the steady thrumming of drums. A long red line trailed by one of the street corners. Already crowds began to gather on the housetops and the water-front. Some clouds formed in the west that looked as if a breeze might be forthcoming. Hull watched the sky anxiously.

The midday meal was served with the men still at their posts. There was no movement made on either side. Toward evening the wind came. No sooner had it ruffled the surface of the water than the *Constitution*, whose cable had been up and down all the day, lifted her anchor from the bottom, and with her main topsail against the mast, she backed away from her close proximity to her neighbors. Then, turning on her heel, she pointed her bow for the harbor mouth. It was necessary for her to sail past every vessel in the fleet. Drums rolled as she approached. Men could be seen scurrying to and fro, and as she passed by the flagship, a brand-new seventy-four, her three tiers of guns frowned evilly down, and a half-port dropped with a clatter. A sigh of relief went up as the *Constitution* passed by unchallenged.

There were but three vessels now to pass, – a sloop of war, a large brig, and a forty-four-gun frigate that lay well to the mouth of the harbor. The latter, apparently in obedience to signals, was getting in her anchor and preparing to get under way; but before the *Constitution* had reached her the breeze died down, and before twilight was over it was dead calm. Hull dropped his anchor, and close beside him, the Englishman dropped his. He was at least two minutes longer taking in his topsails. It continued

calm throughout the early watches of the night. At three o'clock in the morning there was a sound of many oars. The officers were on the alert. "They are coming down to attack us in small boats," suggested one of the junior lieutenants. But soon it was perceived that such was not the intention, for in the dim light the big brig could be seen approaching, towed by a dozen boat's crews working at the oars. There was no reason for longer maintaining any secrecy, and Hull called his crew to quarters in the usual fashion. The sounds might have been heard on shore; but the brig, when she had once reached a berth on the American's quarter, dropped her anchor quietly.

With the gray of morning came a new wind from the westward, and with it the *Constitution* slipped out of port, the two vessels that had menaced her all night long not making a movement to prevent her going. Once well out in the channel, the feeling of suspense was succeeded by one of relief and joy. The fugitive, soaked with bilge water, shivering and hungry, emerged from his hiding-place as he felt the movement of the vessel's sailing.

"How is that man McGovern doing?" asked Captain Hull of Lieutenant Morris, who was dining with him in the cabin. "He ought to be of some use after the trouble and worry he has caused us."

"I'm sorry to say he isn't," responded Morris, shrugging his shoulders. "He isn't worth powder. Why, even the forecastle boys cuff him about and bully him! He not only lacks spirit, but he is

one of those men, I think, who are somehow born cowards. But he has been a sailor at some time or other, I take it, although he told me that he was only cook's helper in the galley on board the *Poictiers*. That's his billet now on board of us, by the way."

It was true: McGovern not only bore the name of a coward, but he looked it, every inch of him. His shifty eyes would lift up for an instant, and then slide away. His elbow was always raised as if to ward off a blow. He acted as if he expected to have things thrown at him. He invited ill treatment by his every look, and he received many blows, and many things were thrown at him. And the unthinking made fun of all this, and used him for their dirty work, and he did not resent it. He took orders from the powder-monkeys, and cringed to the steerage steward. As to the officers and midshipmen, he trembled when they approached him, and after they had passed he would spring forward and hide somewhere, panting, as if he had escaped some danger. The sight of the boatswain deprived him of the power of speech. He acted like a cur that had been whipped, and in fact he lived a dog's life. And yet for this man, those who despised him would have gone to the bottom. Aye, and cheerfully, for behind him lay the question soon to be cause enough for the shedding of much blood.

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