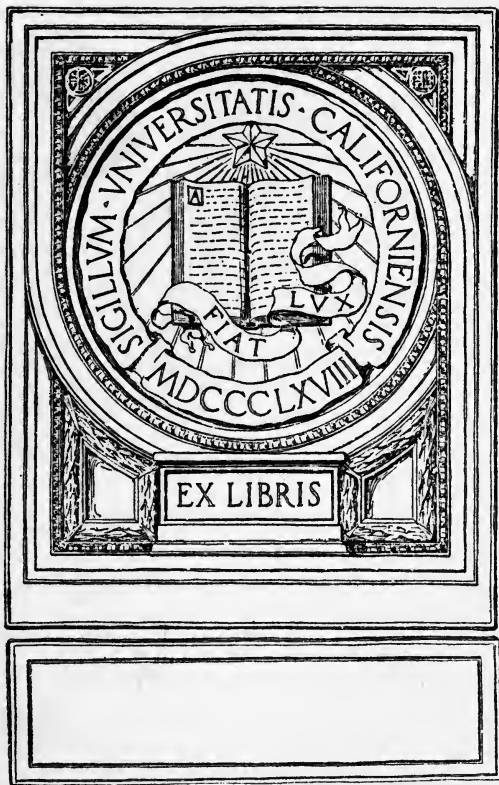


# GENTLEMEN ROVERS

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E. ALEXANDER POWELL









**GENTLEMEN ROVERS**



UNIV. OF  
CALIFORNIA



Commodore Truxtun leaped into the shrouds.



# GENTLEMEN ROVERS

BY

E. ALEXANDER POWELL, F.R.G.S.

AUTHOR OF "THE LAST FRONTIER," ETC.

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Published September, 1913

TO THE  
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CONGRESS



To

THE FINEST GENTLEMAN I KNOW

MY FATHER

287955

“There’s a Legion that never was ’listed,  
That carries no colors or crest,  
But, split in a thousand detachments,  
Is breaking the road for the rest.

\* \* \*

The ends o’ the Earth were our portion,  
The ocean at large was our share,  
There was never a skirmish to windward  
But the Leaderless Legion was there.

\* \* \*

We preach in advance of the Army,  
We skirmish ahead of the Church,  
With never a gunboat to help us  
When we’re scuppered and left in the lurch.  
But we know as the cartridges finish  
And we’re filed on our last little shelves,  
That the Legion that never was ’listed  
Will send us as good as ourselves.

\* \* \*

Then a health (we must drink it in whispers)  
To our wholly unauthorized horde—  
To the line of our dusty foreloopers,  
To the Gentlemen Rovers abroad!”

—*The Lost Legion.*

## FOREWORD

THIS book is written as a tribute to some men who have been overlooked by History and forgotten by Fame. Though they won for us more than half the territory comprised within our present-day borders, not only have no monuments been erected to perpetuate their exploits in bronze and marble, but they lie for the most part in forgotten and neglected graves, some of them under alien skies. Boyd, Truxtun, Eaton, Reed, Lafitte, Smith, Ide, Ward, Walker—even their names hold no significance for their countrymen of the present generation, yet they played great parts in our national drama. After two decades of history-making in Hindustan, Boyd came back to his own country and ably seconded William Henry Harrison in breaking the power of the great Indian confederation which threatened to check the white man's westward march. When both France and England were our enemies, and the gloom of despondency hung like a cloud over the land, it was Truxtun and his

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bluejackets who put new heart into the nation by their victories. Eaton and his motley army marched across six hundred miles of African desert, and by bringing the Barbary despots to their knees accomplished that which had been unsuccessfully attempted by every naval power in Europe. Captain Reed, of the *General Armstrong*, after holding off a British force twenty times the strength of his own, sunk his vessel rather than surrender. To a pirate and smuggler named Jean Lafitte, more than any other person save Andrew Jackson, we owe our thanks for saving New Orleans from capture and Louisiana from invasion. Jedediah Smith blazed the route of the Overland Trail and showed us the way to California, and a quarter of a century later Frémont, Ide, Sloat, and Stockton made the land beyond the Sierras ours. William Walker came within an ace of changing the map of Middle America, and made the name of American a synonym for courage from the Rio Grande to Panama, while on the other side of the world another American, Frederick Townsend Ward, raised and led that ever victorious army whose exploits were General Gordon's chief claim to fame. There was not one of these men of whom we have not reason to be proud. But because they did their work unoffi-

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cially, in what might aptly be described as "shirt-sleeve warfare," and because they went ahead without waiting for the tardy sanction of those who guided our ship of state, the deeds they performed have never received befitting recognition from those who follow by the trails they made, who grow rich from the mines that they discovered, who dwell upon the lands they won. And that is why I am going to ask you, my friends, as in the following pages I lead these forgotten heroes before you in imaginary review, to raise your hats in respect and admiration to this company of brave soldiers and gallant gentlemen who so stoutly upheld American prestige and American traditions in many far corners of the world.





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The programme was always the same: the sudden rush  
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**FOR RENT: AN ARMY ON ELEPHANTS**



## FOR RENT: AN ARMY ON ELEPHANTS

THE pitiless Indian sun had poured down upon the Hyderabad *maidan* until its sandy surface glowed like a stove at white heat. Drawn up in motionless ranks, which stretched from end to end of the great parade-ground, was a division of cavalry: squadron after squadron of scarlet-coated troopers on sleek and shining horses; row after row of brown and bearded faces peering stolidly from under the white turbans. The rays of the sun danced and sparkled upon ten thousand lance-points; the feeble breeze picked up ten thousand pennons and fluttered them into a white-and-scarlet cloud. Now and then the silence would be broken by a clash of steel as a horse tossed its head or a *sowar* stirred uneasily in his saddle. Sitting a white Arab, a score of paces in advance of the foremost rank, very stiff and soldierly in his gorgeous uniform, was a tall young man whose ruddy cheeks and pleasant eyes looked strangely out of place in so Oriental a setting.

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From somewhere within the city walls a bugle spoke shrilly and was answered by another and then another, each nearer than the one preceding. The young man in the splendid uniform barked an order, and men and horses stiffened into rigidity as sharply as though an electric current had gone through them. Through the twin-towered gateway of the city advanced a procession, colorful as a circus, dazzling as a durbar. The two figures who rode at the head of the glittering cortege formed an almost startling contrast. One of them answered in every detail the popular conception of an Asiatic potentate: haughty of manner, portly of person, with a clear, dark skin and wonderfully piercing eyes and a great black beard, spreading fan-wise upon his breast. An aigret of diamonds flashed and scintillated in his flame-colored turban; rubies, large as robin's eggs, gleamed in his ears, and hanging from his neck over his pale blue surtout was a rope of pearls which would have roused the envy of an empress. His companion, to whom he paid marked attention, was equally noticeable, though in quite a different fashion: a lean, smooth-shaven, lantern-jawed man, still in the middle thirties, very cold and reserved of manner, with a great beak of a nose and a jaw like a granite crag. It did not need



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the cocked hat and gold epaulets of a British general to mark him as a soldier.

As the cortege cantered onto the *maidan* the massed bands of the cavalry burst into a wild, barbaric march, brass and kettle-drums crashing together in stirring discord. The strains ceased as abruptly as they began, and the youthful commander, rising in his stirrups, shot his blade into the air and called in a voice like a trumpet:

“Cheers for his Highness!”

And back came a guttural roar from ten thousand throats:

“Long live the Nizam!”

Obviously gratified at the warmth of his greeting, the ruler of the Deccan wheeled his horse and came cantering up to the cavalryman, whose sword flashed in salute.

“Boyd Sahib,” he said, “you are a veritable magician. You turn ryots into soldiers as readily as a fakir turns a stone into bread. Your men are admirable. I congratulate you on their appearance.”

Then, turning to his taciturn companion:

“Sir Arthur Wellesley, permit me to present to you Boyd Sahib, commander of my cavalry and my trusted friend. General Boyd,” he added, glancing at the Englishman with a malicious

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smile, "is a very brilliant soldier—and an American."

Thus met, when the nineteenth century was still in its swaddling-clothes, two extraordinary men: Sir Arthur Wellesley, who in later years, as the Duke of Wellington, was to gain undying fame by conquering Napoleon; and General John Parker Boyd, an American soldier of fortune, who rendered most gallant service to his own people, but whose very name has been forgotten by them.

Jack Boyd, as his boyhood companions in Newburyport used to call him, was born with the spirit of adventure strong within him. Almost before he had graduated from dresses to knee-trousers he would linger about the wharfs of the quaint old town, drinking in the stories of strange places and stranger doings told him by the seafarers who were wont to congregate along the water-front, or staring wistfully at the big, black merchantmen about to sail for foreign parts. He was wont to say that it was a perverse and unkind fate which caused him to be born in so inauspicious a year as 1764, for, though there was no more ardent youngster in all New England, his youth caused the recruiting sergeants of the Continental Army to whom he applied for

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enlistment to pat him on the shoulder and remark encouragingly: "Come again, son, when you're a few years older."

Thus it was that he saw unroll before him that marvellous moving-picture of the birth of a nation, which began on the greensward at Lexington and ended before the British lines at Yorktown, without being able to play any greater part in those stirring events than does a spectator in the thrilling scenes which he pays his five cents to see depicted on a screen. Indeed, a twelve-month passed after the last British soldier left our shores before young Boyd achieved the ambition of his life by obtaining an ensign's commission in the 2d Regiment of Foot and donned the blue coat and buff breeches of an officer in the American army. Although within a year he had been promoted to lieutenant, his was not the temperament which could long endure the monotony of garrison life, with its unending round of guard-mounting and small-arms practice and company drill. It is scarcely to be wondered at, therefore, that before the gold braid on his lieutenant's uniform had time to tarnish he had handed in his papers and had booked passage on an East Indiaman sailing out of Boston for Madras. The year 1788, then, saw this youngster of

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four-and-twenty landed on the coast of Coromandel, poor in acquaintances and pocket but rich in adventurousness and pluck.

He could have taken his military talents to no better market, for at this period of India's troubled history a brilliant career awaited a man whose wits were as sharp as his sword. The last quarter of the eighteenth century found all India ablaze with racial and religious hatred. Wars were as frequent as strikes are in the United States. Though the French were still supreme in the south of the peninsula, the English power was steadily rising in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras. There were really two distinct struggles in progress: the English were fighting the French and the Hindus were fighting the Mohomedans. The most powerful of the native princes at this time were the Nizam of Hyderabad, and the Peishwa, as the ruler of the Mahratta tribes was called—both of whom had, for reasons of policy, espoused the English cause—and Tippoo Sahib, the son of a Mohammedan military adventurer who had made himself Sultan of Mysore, who was an ally of the French. Ranged on the one side, then, were the British, with their allies, the Nizam and the Peishwa, while opposed to them were the French and Tippoo of Mysore.

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All of the reigning princes of India maintained extensive military establishments, and soldiers of fortune found at their courts rapid promotion and lavish pay. When Boyd landed in India he was confronted with the problem which of the rival causes he should make his own, and it speaks well for his sagacity and foresight that he promptly decided to offer his services to the allies of the English, for at that time most students of politics, in India and out of it, believed that the future of the peninsula was to be Gallic rather than Anglo-Saxon.

From Madras Boyd made his way on horseback to the Mahratta country, where his attractive personality and soldierly appearance so impressed the Peishwa that he gave the young American the command of a cavalry brigade of fifteen hundred men. Boyd was now in possession of the raw material for which he had hankered, and he forthwith proceeded to show his extraordinary skill in welding, tempering, and sharpening it. From daybreak until dark his camp resounded to the call of bugles, the words of command, and the clatter of galloping hoofs. He hammered his men into shape as a blacksmith hammers a bar of iron, until they combined the inflexible discipline of Prussian foot-guards with the mobility and

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endurance of Texas rangers. His chance to test the quality of his handiwork came in 1790, when Tippoo Sultan, failing in his attempt to bring on a renewal of the war between England and France, turned loose his hordes and overran the land. In the three years' war which followed, the British, under Lord Cornwallis, who was striving to regain in India the reputation he had lost at Yorktown, were aided by the Mahrattas and the Nizam, who were induced by fear and jealousy to join in the struggle against their powerful neighbor. Thus Opportunity knocked sharply on Boyd's door. Commanding a body of as fine horsemen as ever threw leg across saddle, his name quickly became a synonym for audacity and daring. Riding, wholly without support, into the very heart of Tippoo's dominions, he would strike a series of paralyzing blows, burn a dozen towns, capture or destroy immense stores of ammunition, exact a huge indemnity, and be back in his own territory again before any troops could be brought up to oppose him. Boyd's flying columns played no small part, indeed, in the campaign which ended in 1792 with the defeat of Tippoo—a defeat for which the Sultan had to pay by ceding half his dominions, paying an indemnity of three thousand lacs of rupees (one hundred million dol-

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lars), and giving his two sons as hostages for his future good behavior.

Boyd, meanwhile, had never let slip an opportunity for improving his knowledge of Hindustani and its kindred dialects or familiarizing himself with the complex conditions, racial, religious, and political, which prevailed in Hindustan. Realizing that the Mahratta power was on the wane, he resigned from the service of the Peishwa, and, bearing letters of the highest commendation from that ruler to the British envoy at the court of the Nizam, he turned his horse's head toward Hyderabad. In a letter to his father, written at this time, he says: "On my arrival I was presented to his Highness in form by the English consul. My reception was as favorable as my most sanguine wishes had anticipated. After the usual ceremony was over he presented me with the command of two *kansolars* of infantry, each of which consists of five hundred men." Continuing, he described in detail the army of the Nizam, which at that time consisted of one hundred and fifty thousand infantry, sixty thousand cavalry, and five hundred elephants, each of which bore a "castle" containing a nabob and his attendants. Can't you picture the scene when that letter, with its strange foreign postmarks,

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reached the old brick house in the quaint New England town; how the parents read and re-read that message from the son who was adventuring in foreign parts, and how the neighbors dropped in of evenings to hear the latest news of the boy they all knew, who was carving out a career with his sword half the world away? Success is, after all, a rather tasteless thing if there are no home folks to rejoice in it.

Fortuna, that capricious beauty whose favor so many brave men have sought in vain, seemed to have lost her heart to the stalwart American, for in 1799, when Tippoo and his savage soldiery once more broke loose and swept across the peninsula, leaving a trail of corpses and burning villages behind them, the Nizam, recalling the tales he had heard of Boyd's exploits as a cavalry leader, gave him the command of a division of ten thousand turbaned troopers. Nor did the fair goddess desert him even when he was captured by a body of Mysore horsemen, taken before Tippoo Sahib himself, and, upon his stoutly refusing to turn traitor to the Nizam, condemned to death by torture. And the torturers of the tyrant of Mysore bore a most evil reputation. Overpowering the sentries who were set to guard him, he succeeded in making his way, thanks to his flu-





The death of Tipu-Sahib at the storming of Seringapatam.

From a painting by R. de Moraine.



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ency in Hindustani, through the enemy's lines, rejoining the Nizam's forces in time to take part in the storming of the Sultan's capital of Seringapatam, Tippoo being killed in a hand-to-hand struggle after a last stand at the city gates. Thus died, as he would have wished—with his boots on—the most dangerous adversary with whom Britain had to contend in the winning of her Eastern empire.

Early in the nineteenth century Boyd, who, as the result of the generous rewards he had received from his royal employers, had by this time become possessed of considerable means, left the service of the Nizam, much against the wishes of that monarch, and organized an army of his own. Numerically, it wasn't much of an army, as armies go, having at no time exceeded two thousand men, but it was as businesslike a force as ever responded to a bugle. Boyd, whose reputation as a cavalry leader extended from Bengal to Malabar, had the horsemen of all India to draw from, and he recruited nothing but the best, the men with whom he filled his ranks being as hard as nails and as keen as razors. His second in command was an Irish soldier of fortune named William Tone, a brother of Wolf Tone, the famous rebel patriot.

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As Boyd reckoned on counterbalancing the smallness of his force by its extreme mobility, he adopted the novel expedient of transporting his artillery on the backs of elephants, thus making it possible for the guns to keep pace with the cavalry even on his whirlwind raids, for an elephant, though burdened with a field-piece and half a dozen soldiers, can put mile after mile behind it at a swinging, ungainly gait which it will tax any horse to maintain. Military history presents no more fantastic picture than that of this sun-tanned Yankee adventurer spurring across an Indian countryside with a brigade of beturbaned lancers and a score or so of lumbering elephants, the muzzles of brass field-guns frowning from their howdahs, tearing along behind him. What a pity that the folk in Newburyport could not have seen him!

The entire outfit—elephants, horses, cannon, and weapons—was Boyd's personal property, and he rented it to those princes who had need of and were able to pay for its service precisely as a garage rents an automobile. The prices he obtained for it were enormous, and ere long he became a wealthy man. From one end of the country to the other he led his scarlet-coated mercenaries, selling their services in turn to his

## For Rent: An Army on Elephants

former employers, the Nizam and the Peishwa, and to the rulers of Gwalior and Indore. When a force was needed for a particularly desperate service or for a hopeless hope they sent for Boyd. And he always delivered the goods. Fighting was going on everywhere, and he never lacked employment. But he was far too discerning not to recognize the fact that the power of England was steadily, if slowly, increasing, and that her complete domination of India, which could not much longer be delayed, must inevitably put an end to independent soldiering as a profitable profession. In 1808, therefore, he sold his army, elephants and all, to Colonel Felose, a Neapolitan who had seen service under many flags, and with misted eyes and a choking throat for the last time rode along the lines of his faithful troopers. A few days later he set sail for Paris, for, with the Corsican's star high in the heavens, there seemed no better place for such a man to seek adventure and advancement. Disappointed in his hope of obtaining a commission under the Napoleonic eagles, he turned his face toward home, and in 1810, after an absence of more than twenty years, he felt the cobblestones of his native Newburyport beneath his feet once more.

Boyd's adventurous career under his own flag

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and in the service of his own people forms quite another though a scarcely less thrilling story. Trained and experienced officers being in those days few and far between, the government offered him the colonelcy of the 4th Regiment of Infantry, which he promptly accepted, displaying such energy in drilling his men that when his regiment marched through the streets of Boston on its way to Pittsburg the local papers commented editorially on the smartness of its appearance. When William Henry Harrison, then governor of the Territory of Indiana (which included the present States of Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin), realizing the imperative necessity of smashing the great Indian confederation which Tecumseh, the Shawnee warrior-statesman, was so painstakingly building to oppose the white man's further progress westward, called for troops to do the business, Boyd put his men on flat-boats, floated them down to the falls of the Ohio, and marched them overland to Vincennes, his dusty, footsore column tramping into Harrison's stockaded headquarters almost before that veteran frontiersman had realized that they had started. Boyd was in direct command, under Harrison, of the little expeditionary force of nine hundred men throughout the whirlwind campaign which culminated on a drizzling November



The battle of Tippecanoe.

From a print in the New York Public Library.





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morning in 1811 on the banks of the Tippecanoe River. Tippecanoe was, I suppose, the only battle which our army ever fought in high hats, for the absurd uniform of the American infantry, discarded a few months later, consisted of blue, brass-buttoned tail-coats, skin-tight pantaloons, and "stovepipe" hats with red, white, and blue cockades. Though taken by surprise and outnumbered six to one, Boyd's soldiery showed the result of their training by standing like a stone wall against the onset of the whooping redskins, pouring in a volley of buckshot at close range which left the hordes of warriors wavering, undecided whether to come on or to retreat. At this psychological moment Boyd ordered up the squadron of dragoons which he had been holding in reserve for just such an opportunity. "Right into line!" he roared in the voice which had resounded over so many fields in far-off Hindustan. "Trot! Gallop! *Charge!* Hip, hip, here we go!" It was the charge of the cavalry, delivered with all the smashing suddenness with which a boxer delivers a solar-plexus blow, which did the business. The Indians, panic-stricken at the sight of the oncoming troopers in their brass helmets and streaming plumes of horsehair, broke and ran. Tippecanoe was won; Harrison was started on the road which was to end in the White House; the

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peril of Tecumseh's Indian confederation was ended forever, and the civilization of the West was advanced a quarter of a century.

In the following year, upon the outbreak of our second war with England, Boyd, who had been commissioned a brigadier-general, commanded a division of Wilkinson's army in the abortive American invasion of Upper Canada, and, on November 11, 1813, fought the drawn battle of Chrysler's Field. "Taps" were sounded to his picturesque career on October 4, 1830. He died, not as he would have wished, sword in hand at the head of charging squadrons, but quite peacefully in his bed, holding the prosaic position of port officer of Boston, to which post he had been appointed by that other gallant fighter, President Andrew Jackson. As the end approached I doubt not that in mind he was far away from the brick and plaster of the New England city, and that his thoughts harked back to those mad, glad days when he and his lancers rode across the plains of Hindustan and his elephants rocked and rolled behind him.

**WHEN WE FOUGHT NAPOLEON**



## WHEN WE FOUGHT NAPOLEON

**T**HIS is the story of some forgotten fights and fighters in a forgotten war. The governments of the two nations which did the fighting—France and the United States—refused, indeed, to admit that there was any war at all, and, in a sense, they were right, for there was never any declaration of hostilities, and there was never signed a treaty of peace. But it was a very real war, nevertheless, with some of the fiercest battles ever fought on deep water, and when it was over we had laid the foundations of a navy, we had won the respect of the European powers, and we had humbled the pride of Napoleon as it had been humbled only once before, when Nelson annihilated the French fleet in the battle of the Nile.

At the time that this narrative opens Bonaparte had just finished his wonderful campaign in northern Italy, and the French nation, flushed with confidence by his remarkable series of victories, was swaggering about with a chip on its

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shoulder, and defying the nations of the world to knock it off. In fact, the leaders of the Reign of Terror, drunk with unaccustomed power, had lost their heads as completely as the victims whom they had guillotined on the Place de la Révolution. Thoroughly typical of this insolent and arrogant attitude was the French Directory's peremptory demand that we instantly abrogate the treaty which John Jay, our minister to England, had just concluded with that country, basing its unwarrantable interference with our affairs on the ground that the terms of the treaty were injurious to the commercial interests of France. Upon our curt refusal to accede to this preposterous demand, Charles C. Pinckney, our minister at Paris, was notified by the French Government that it would hold no further intercourse with him, and the very next mail-packet brought the news that he had been expelled from France. Not content with this extraordinary and uncalled-for affront to a friendly nation, French cruisers began seizing our ships under a decree of their government authorizing the capture of neutral vessels having on board any of the products of Great Britain or her colonies, for at this time, remember, France and England were at war, as they were, indeed, throughout nearly the whole of Napoleon's reign. As the bulk of our trade at this period was with

## When We Fought Napoleon

the British colonies in the West Indies, it was evident that this decree was aimed directly at us. Every packet that came from West Indian waters brought news of American ships overhauled and plundered, of sailors beaten and kidnapped, and of cargoes seized and confiscated by the French, the authenticated despatches to the State Department naming nearly a thousand vessels which had been captured. So bold did the French become that one of their privateers actually had the audacity to sail into Charleston Roads and, almost under the guns of the batteries, to burn to the water's edge a British vessel which was lying in the harbor.

Though it was evident that nothing short of a miracle could avert war, President Adams, appreciating the ill-preparedness of the United States, which had only recently emerged from the Revolution in a weakened and impoverished condition, determined to make one more try for peace by despatching to France a special mission composed of Minister Pinckney, Elbridge Gerry, and John Marshall, the last-named later Chief Justice of the United States. Though in all our diplomatic history we have sent abroad no more able or distinguished embassy, the reception its members received at the hands of the French Government was as disgraceful as it was ludicrous. The French,

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Directory at this time was composed of low and irresponsible politicians of the ward-heeler type who had climbed to power during the French Revolution, so that, incredible as such a state of affairs may seem in these days, the negotiations soon degenerated into an attempt to fleece the American envoys, who were informed quite frankly that their success depended entirely upon their agreeing to bribe—or, as the French politely put it, to give a *douceur* to—certain avaricious members of the Directory. Not only this, but the American diplomatists were told that, if the bribes demanded were not forthcoming, orders would be given to the war-ships on the French West Indian station to ravage the coasts of the United States. The chronicles of our foreign relations contain nothing which, for sheer impudence and insult, even approaches this attempt to levy blackmail on the nation. Even the astute Talleyrand, at that time French Foreign Minister, so far misjudged the characters of the men with whom he was dealing as to insinuate that a gift of money to members of the government was a necessary preliminary to the negotiations, and that a refusal would bring on war. Then all the pent-up rage and indignation of Pinckney burst forth. “War be it, then!” he exclaimed. “Millions for defence, sir, but not one cent for tribute!”



## When We Fought Napoleon

Upon learning of this crowning insult to his representatives, President Adams, on March 19, 1798, informed Congress that the mission on which he had built his hopes of peace had proved a failure. Then the war-fever, which had temporarily been held in abeyance, swept over the country like fire in dry grass. Talleyrand's attempt to whip America into a revocation of Jay's treaty had ignominiously failed. He had made the inexcusable mistake of underestimating the spirit and resources of his opponents. Congress promptly abrogated all our treaties with France, prohibited American vessels from entering French ports, and French vessels from coming into American waters, and voted a large sum for national defence. The land forces were increased, the coastwise fortifications strengthened, ships of war were hurriedly laid down, volunteers from every walk of life besieged the recruiting stations, Washington reassumed command of the army. At Portland, Portsmouth, Salem, Chatham, Norwich, Philadelphia, and Baltimore the shipyards resounded to the clatter of tools, for those were before the days of big guns and armor-plate, and a man-of-war could, if necessary, be built and equipped in ninety days.

Out from behind this war-cloud rose the thrilling strains of "Hail, Columbia." When the war-

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fever was at its height, a young actor and singer named Fox—a vaudeville artist, we should call him nowadays—who was appearing at a Philadelphia theatre, called one morning on his friend Joseph Hopkinson, a young and clever lawyer, and a son of that Francis H. Hopkinson whose signature may be seen at the bottom of the Declaration of Independence.

“Look here, Joe,” said Fox, dropping into a chair, “I need some help and you’re the only man I know who can give it to me. No, no, old man, it’s not money I’m after. To-morrow night I’m to have a benefit at the theatre, but not a single box has been sold; so, unless something can be done to attract public attention, I’m afraid I shall have a mighty thin house. Now it strikes me that, with all this war-fever in the air, if I could get some patriotic verses, something really fiery and inspiring, written to the tune of ‘The President’s March,’ I might draw a crowd. Several of the people around the theatre have tried it, but they have all given it up as a bad job, and say that it can’t be done. So you’re my last hope, Joe, and I think you could do it.”

Shutting himself up in his study, within an hour Hopkinson had completed the first verse and chorus of what was to prove one of the greatest of our national songs, and had submitted them to

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his wife, who sang them to a harpsichord accompaniment. The tune and the words harmonized. A few hours later the song was completed and was being memorized by Fox. The next morning Philadelphia was placarded with announcements that that evening Mr. Fox would sing, for the first time on any stage, a new patriotic song. The house was packed to the doors. As the orchestra broke into the familiar opening bars of "The President's March," and Fox, slender and debonair, bowed from behind the footlights, the audience grew hushed with expectancy. When the now familiar words,

"Immortal patriots, rise once more!  
Defend your rights, defend your shore!"

went rolling through the theatre from pit to gallery, the audience went wild. Eight times they made him sing it through, and the ninth time they rose and joined in the rousing chorus:

"Firm, united let us be,  
Rallying round our Liberty.  
Like a band of brothers joined,  
Peace and safety we shall find."

Night after night the singing of "Hail, Columbia," in the theatres was applauded by audiences de-

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lirious with enthusiasm, and within a few days it was being sung by boys in the streets of every city from Portland to Savannah. Never since the days of Bunker Hill had the nation been so stirred as it was in that summer of 1798.

On July 6, with the red-white-and-blue ensign streaming proudly from her main truck, the sloop of war *Delaware*, twenty guns, of Baltimore, under Stephen Decatur, Sr., put to sea to an accompaniment of booming cannon. Cape Henry had scarcely sunk below the horizon before she was hailed by a merchantman which had been boarded and plundered by a French privateer only the day before. Upon hearing this news Decatur set off in a pursuit as eager as that with which a bloodhound follows the trail of a fugitive criminal. A few hours later his lookouts reported four vessels dead ahead. Being unable to determine which was the privateer, he ran in his guns, closed his ports, and keeping on his course until he was sure that he had been seen, stood hurriedly off, as though afraid of being captured. Just as he had anticipated, the Frenchman fell into the trap, and piling on his canvas, bore down upon him. It was not until the privateersman drew close enough to make out the gun-ports and the unusual number of men on the American's decks, that he discovered Decatur's ruse and attempted

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to escape. But it was too late. The *Delaware's* superior speed enabled her easily to overhaul the Frenchman, which proved to be *La Incroyable*, fourteen guns and seventy men. So accurate and deadly was the fire poured into her by the *Delaware's* gunners (forerunners, remember, of those bluejackets who handle the twelve-inch guns on the dreadnaught *Delaware* to-day) that within ten minutes after the action had commenced the French tricolor came fluttering down. We had struck our first blow against the power of France.

The captured vessel was sent into port under a prize crew, was refitted, added to the American Navy as the *Retaliation*—fitting name!—went to sea under command of William Bainbridge (the same who a few years later was to lose the warship *Philadelphia* to the Barbary pirates in the harbor of Tripoli), and shortly afterward was recaptured by the French frigate *l'Insurgente*, being the only vessel of our little navy taken by the French.

By the beginning of 1799 the West Indian waters were as effectually patrolled by American warships as a great city is patrolled by policemen. The newly built American frigates were objects of great amusement and derision to the French and British officers stationed in the West Indian

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colonies, for they were far too heavily armed, according to European ideas, carrying almost double the number of guns usual to vessels of their class. It is interesting to recall the fact, however, that sixty-odd years later European officers were equally derisive and sceptical of another American innovation in war-ships which was destined to revolutionize naval warfare—the monitor. But before long the sceptics were compelled to revise their opinions of the fighting qualities of our infant navy. Our fleet was at this time divided into two squadrons, both of which made their headquarters at St. Christopher, or, as it was more commonly called, St. Kitts, on the island of Antigua; one, under Commodore Barry, running as far south as the Guianas, while the other, under Commodore Truxtun, cruised northward to Santo Domingo, thus effectually cutting off from commercial intercourse with the mother country the rich French colonies in the Caribbean.

Truxtun was a most picturesque and romantic figure. Short and stout, red-faced, gray-eyed, loud-voiced, gallant with women and short-tempered with men, he was as typical a sea fighter as ever trod a quarter-deck with a brass telescope tucked under his arm. From the time when, as a boy of twelve, he ran away to sea, until,

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a national hero, he was laid to rest in Christ Church graveyard in Philadelphia, his life was as full of hair-breadth escapes and hair-raising adventures as that of one of Mr. George A. Henty's heroes. A sailor before the mast when scarcely in his teens, he was impressed into the British Navy, where his ability attracted such attention that he was offered a midshipman's warrant, which he refused. When only twenty years of age he commanded his own ship, in which he succeeded, though at great personal hazard, in smuggling large quantities of much-needed powder into the rebellious colonies. Eventually his ship was captured and he was made a prisoner. Escaping from the British prison in the West Indies where he was confined, he made his way to the United States, obtained letters of marque from the first Continental Congress, and was the first to get to sea of that long line of privateersmen who, first in the Revolution, and afterward in the War of 1812, practically drove British commerce from the Atlantic. At the close of the Revolution Truxtun returned to the merchant service, in which he rose to wealth and position. When the American Navy was organized under the stimulus of French aggression, he was offered and accepted the command of the thirty-eight-gun frigate *Con-*

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*stellation*, a new and very beautiful vessel, splendidly officered and manned, and with heels as fast as her gun-fire was heavy.

While cruising off Antigua, on February 9, 1799, the *Constellation's* lookout reported a French war-ship, which, upon being overhauled, proved to be *l'Insurgente*, forty guns, which had the reputation of being one of the fastest ships in the world, and was commanded by Captain Barreault, an officer celebrated in the French Navy as a desperate fighter and a resourceful sailor. As the *Constellation*, with her crew at quarters and her decks cleared for action, came booming down upon him, Captain Barreault broke out the French tricolor at his masthead and fired a gun to windward, which signified, in the language of the seas, that he was ready for a yard-arm to yard-arm combat. Truxtun's reply was to range alongside his adversary, a flag of stripes and stars at every masthead, and pour in a broadside which raked *l'Insurgente's* decks from stem to stern. The first great naval action in which the American Navy ever bore a part had begun.

Waiting until the *Constellation* was well abreast of her, at a distance of perhaps thirty feet (modern war-ships seldom fight at a range of less than three miles), *l'Insurgente* replied, firing high in an



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attempt to disable the American by bringing down her rigging. Midshipman David Porter, a youngster barely in his teens, was stationed in the fore-top. Seeing that the top-mast, which had been seriously damaged by the French fire, was tottering and about to fall, but being unable to make himself heard on deck above the din of battle, he himself assumed the responsibility of lowering the foretopsail yard, thus relieving the strain on the mast and preventing a mishap which would probably have changed the result of the battle. That midshipman rose, in after years, to be an admiral and the commander-in-chief of the American Navy.

Barreault, who had a much larger crew than his adversary, soon saw that his vessel was in danger of being pounded to pieces by the American gunners who were making every shot tell, and that his only hope of victory lay in getting alongside and boarding, depending upon his superior numbers to take the American vessel with the cutlass. With this in view, he ordered the boarding parties to their stations, sent men into the rigging with grappling-irons with which to hold the ships together when they touched, directed the guns to be loaded with small shot that they might cause greater execution at close quarters, and then, putting his helm

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hard down, attempted to run alongside the *Constellation*. But Truxtun had anticipated this very manœuvre, and was prepared for it. Seizing his opportunity—and in sea-battles opportunities do not last long or come often—he whirled his ship about as a polo player whirls his pony, and ran squarely across the enemy's bows, pouring in a rain of lead as he passed, which all but annihilated the boarding parties drawn up on the deck of *l'Insurgente*.

Foiled in his attempt to get to hand-grips with his enemy, the Frenchman sheered off and the duel at short range continued, the *Constellation*, magnificently handled, sailing first along *l'Insurgente's* port side, firing as she went, and then, crossing her bows, repeating the manœuvre on her starboard quarter. Nothing is more typical of the iron discipline enforced by the American naval commanders in those early days than an incident that occurred when this duel between the two frigates was at its height. As a storm of shot from the Frenchman's batteries came crashing and smashing into the *Constellation*, a gunner, seeing his mate decapitated by a solid shot, became so demoralized that he retreated from his gun, whereupon an officer drew his pistol and shot the man dead.

Time after time Truxtun repeated his evolution

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of literally sailing around *l'Insurgente*, until every gun in her main batteries had been dismantled, her crew being left only the small guns with which to continue the action. It speaks volumes for Barreault's bravery that, with half his crew dead or wounded, and with a terribly battered and almost defenceless ship, he did continue the action, his weary, blood-stained, powder-blackened men loading and firing their few remaining guns dauntlessly. Seeing the weakened condition of his enemy, Truxtun now prepared to end the battle. Before the French had time to grasp the full significance of his manœuvre, he had put his helm hard down, and the *Constellation*, suddenly looming out of the battle smoke, bore down upon *l'Insurgente* with the evident intention of crossing her stern and raking her with a broadside to which she would be unable to reply. Though no braver man than Barreault ever fought a ship, he instantly appreciated that this would mean an unnecessary slaughter of his men; so, with the tears streaming down his cheeks, he ordered his colors to be struck, and in token of surrender the flag of France slipped slowly and mournfully down. The young republic of the West had avenged the insult of Talleyrand.

It is a remarkable fact that, notwithstanding

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the desperate fighting which characterized this battle, the *Constellation* had only two of her crew killed and three wounded, while the French loss was nearly twenty times that number. Lieutenant Rodgers and Midshipman Porter were immediately sent aboard the captured vessel with a prize crew of only eleven men. After the dead had been buried at sea, the wounded cared for by the American surgeons, and about half of the prisoners transferred to the *Constellation*, Rodgers set such sails on *l'Insurgente* as the wrecked rigging would permit, and laid his course for St. Christopher, it being understood that Truxtun would keep within hail in case his assistance was needed. During the night a heavy gale set in, however, and when day broke upon the heaving ocean the *Constellation* was nowhere to be seen. It was a ticklish situation in which the thirteen Americans found themselves, for they had their work cut out for them to navigate a leaking, shattered, and dismasted ship, while below decks, awaiting the first opportunity which offered to rise and overpower their captors, were nearly two hundred desperate and determined prisoners. There were neither shackles nor handcuffs on board, and the hatchcovers had been destroyed in the action, so that the prisoners were perfectly

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aware that, could they once force their way on deck by a sudden rush, the ship would again be theirs. But they reckoned without Rodgers, for the first men who put their heads above the hatchway found themselves looking into the muzzles of a pair of pistols held by the American lieutenant, whose fingers were twitching on the triggers. During the three days and two nights which the voyage to St. Christopher lasted, a guard of American bluejackets stood constantly around the open hatchway, a pile of loaded small arms close at hand, and a cannon loaded with grape-shot trained menacingly into the prisoner-filled hold. On the evening of the third day, after Truxtun had given her up for lost, *l'Insurgente* limped into port with the flag of the United States flaunting victoriously above that of France.

The 1st of February of the following year found the *Constellation*, still under the command of Commodore Truxtun, cruising off Guadaloupe in the hope of picking up some of the French privateers which were using that colony as a base from which to prey on our West Indian commerce. While loitering off the port of Basse Terre, and praying that something would turn up to pay him for his patience, Truxtun sighted a vessel coming up from the southeast, which from her size and

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build was evidently a French frigate of the first class. As she approached, the keen-eyed American naval officers, scanning her through their glasses, recognized her as the fifty-two-gun frigate *La Vengeance*, one of the most formidable vessels in the French Navy. It was evident from the first, however, that she would much rather run than fight, this anxiety to avoid an encounter being due to the fact that she had on board a large number of officials, high in the colonial service, whom she was bringing out to the colonies from the mother country. No sooner did she perceive the character of the *Constellation*, therefore, than she piled on every yard of canvas and headed for Basse Terre and the protecting guns of its forts. Never had the *Constellation* a better opportunity to display her remarkable sailing qualities, and never did she display them to better advantage. It was well after nightfall, however, before she was able to overhaul the flying Frenchman, so that it was by the light of a full moon, which illumined the scene almost as well as though it were day, that the preparations were completed for the combat. The sea, which was glasslike in its smoothness, as is so often the case in Caribbean waters, seemed to be covered with a veil of shimmering silver, while the battle-lanterns which

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had been lighted on both vessels swung like giant fireflies across the purple sky.

Seeing that escape was hopeless, the French commander hove to and prepared for a desperate resistance. Now, Truxtun had made up his mind that this was to be no long-range duel, in which the Frenchman's heavier metal could not fail to give him an advantage, but a fight at close quarters, in which the smashing broadsides which the *Constellation* was specially designed to deliver could not fail to tell. Just before the beginning of the battle the stout commodore, red-faced, white-wigged, cock-hatted, clad in the blue tail-coat and buff breeches of the American Navy, descended to the gun-deck and walked slowly through the batteries, acknowledging the cheers of the gunners, but emphatically warning them against firing a shot until he gave the word. No one knew better than Truxtun the demoralizing effect of a smashing broadside suddenly delivered at close quarters, and it was this demoralization which he intended to create aboard the enemy. "Load with solid shot," he ordered, and added, speaking to his officers so that the men could hear: "If a man fires a gun before I give the order, shoot him on the spot." Then with boarding-nettings triced up, decks sanded, magazines

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opened, and the tops filled with marines whose duty it was to pick off the French gunners, the *Constellation*, stripped to her fighting canvas, swept grandly into action. As she came within range the French commander opened with his stern-chasers, and in an instant the ordered decks of the American were turned into a shambles. The wounded were carried groaning to the cockpit, where the white-aproned surgeons, their arms bared to the elbow, awaited their grim work, while the dead were hastily ranged along the unengaged side—rows of stark and staring figures beneath the placid moon. Again and again the guns of *La Vengeance* belched smoke and flame, and redder and redder grew the sand with which the *Constellation's* decks were spread, but she still kept coming on. Not until she was squarely abreast of the Frenchman did Truxtun, leaping into the shrouds, bellow through his speaking-trumpet: "Now, boys, give 'em hell!" The American gunners answered with a broadside which made *La Vengeance* reel. The effect was terrible. On the decks of the Frenchman the dead and dying lay in quivering, bleeding heaps. But not for an instant did the French sailors flinch from their guns. Broadside answered broadside, cheer answered cheer, while the men, French and



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American alike, toiled and sweated at their work of carnage. So rapidly were the American guns fired that the men actually had to crawl out of the ports, in the face of a withering fire, for buckets of water with which to cool them off.

The different tactics adopted by the two commanders soon began to show results, for, whereas Truxtun had given orders that his men were to disregard the upper works and to concentrate their fire on the main-deck batteries and the hull, the French commander had from the first directed his fire upon the American's rigging in the hope of crippling her. Shortly after midnight the French fire, which had grown weaker and weaker under the terrible punishment of the *Constellation's* successive broadsides, ceased altogether, and an officer was seen waving a white flag in token of surrender. Twice before, in fact, *La Vengeance* had struck her colors, but owing to the smoke and darkness the Americans had not perceived it. And there was good reason for her surrender, for she had lost one hundred and sixty men out of her crew of three hundred and thirty, while the *Constellation* had but thirty-nine casualties out of a crew of three hundred and ten. Though the French fire had done small damage to the *Constellation's* hull, and had killed a

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comparatively small number of her crew, it had worked terrible havoc in her rigging, it being discovered, just as she was preparing to run alongside her capture and take possession, that every shroud and stay supporting her mainmast had been shot away, and that the mast was tottering and about to fall. The men in the top were under the command of a little midshipman named James Jarvis, who was only thirteen years old. He had been warned by one of his men that the mast was likely to fall at any moment, and had been implored to leave the top while there was still time, which he would have been entirely justified in doing, particularly as the battle was over. But that thirteen-year-old midshipman had in him the stuff of which heroes are made, and resolutely refused to leave his post without orders. The orders never came, for before the crew had time to secure it the great mast crashed over the side, carrying with it to instant death little Jarvis and all of his men save one. Though his name and deed have long since been forgotten by the nation for which he died, he was no whit less a hero than that other boy-sailor, Casabianca, whose self-sacrifice at the battle of the Nile has been made familiar by song and story.

The falling of the *Constellation's* mast reversed

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conditions in an instant, for the surrendered frigate, taking prompt advantage of the victor's temporary helplessness, crowded on all sail and slowly disappeared into the night. By the time the wreck had been chopped away any pursuit of her was hopeless. A few days later she put into the Dutch port of Curaçao in a sinking condition.

Thus continued until February, 1801, an unbroken series of American successes, French war-ships, French privateers, and French merchantmen alike being sunk, captured, or driven from the seas. France's trade with her West Indian colonies was paralyzed, and the prestige of her navy was enormously diminished. Napoleon, as First Consul, had abolished the Directory, and was now the virtual ruler of France, having entire command of all administrative affairs, both civil and military. Forced to admit that from first to last his ships had been out-sailed, out-fought, and out-mancœuvred by the despised Americans, and that a continuance of the war could only result in further disaster and loss of prestige, he began negotiations which led, about the time that the nineteenth century passed its first birthday, to a suspension of hostilities.

During the two and a half years of this unofficial war with the most powerful military nation in the

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world our infant navy had captured eighty-four armed French vessels, mounting over five hundred guns—a success all the more remarkable when it is remembered that our entire naval establishment at the outbreak of hostilities comprised but twenty-two vessels, with four hundred and fifty-six guns. In other words, we had captured almost four times as many ships as we possessed. Not only had we practically destroyed French commerce on this side of the Atlantic, but our own commerce had risen, under the protection of our guns, from fifty-seven million dollars in 1797 to more than seventy-eight million dollars in 1799. Most important of all, however, we had shown to France and to Europe that, when occasion demanded, we both would and could, in the words of our national song, defend our rights and defend our shore.

WHEN WE CAPTURED AN AFRICAN  
KINGDOM



## WHEN WE CAPTURED AN AFRICAN KINGDOM

**D**ID you ever, by any chance, leave the Boston State House by the back door? If so, you found yourself in a quiet and rather shabby thoroughfare, cobble-paved and lined on the farther side by old-fashioned red-brick houses, with white, brass-knocker doors, and iron balconies, and green blinds. That is Derne Street. Though a man standing on Boston Common could break one of its violet-glass windows with a well thrown ball, it is, as it were, a placid backwater of the busy streams of commerce which flow so noisily a few rods away. I wonder how many of the smug frock-coated politicians who hurry through it as a short cut daily have any idea how it got its name; I wonder if any of the people who live upon it know. Though the exploit which this Boston byway was named to commemorate has been overlooked by nearly all our historians, perhaps because its scene was laid in a remote and barbarous country, yet it was a

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feat which, for picturesqueness, daring, and indomitable courage, is deserving of a more generous share of the calcium light of public appreciation. Though I am perfectly aware that history only too often makes dull reading, this chronicle, I promise you, is as bristling with romance and adventure as a hedgehog is with quills.

You must understand, in the first place, that the declining years of the eighteenth century found a perfectly astounding state of affairs prevailing in the Mediterranean, where the four Barbary states—Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli—which stretched along its African shore, collected tribute from every nation whose vessels sailed that sea as methodically as a street-car conductor collects fares. Asserting that they were no common, vulgar buccaneers who plundered vessels indiscriminately, the Barbary corsairs, claiming for themselves the virtual ownership of the Mediterranean, turned it into a sort of maritime toll-road, and professed themselves at war with all who refused to pay roundly for using it. Nor was their boast that they were the masters of the Middle Sea a vain one, scores of captured merchantmen and thousands of European slaves laboring under the African sun proving indubitably that they were amply capable of enforcing their demands.



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As far as the question of economy was concerned, it was about as cheap for a nation to be at war with these bandits of the sea as at peace, for so heavy was the tribute they demanded that their friendship came almost as high as their enmity. It cost Spain, at that time a rich and powerful empire, upward of three million dollars to obtain peace with the Dey of Algiers in 1786. Though England boasted herself mistress of the seas, and in token thereof English admirals carried brooms at their mastheads, she nevertheless spent four hundred thousand dollars annually in propitiating these African despots. Previous to the Revolution there were close on a hundred American vessels, manned by more than twelve hundred seamen, in the Mediterranean, but with the withdrawal of British protection this commerce was entirely abandoned. The ink was scarcely dry on the treaty of peace, however, before we had despatched diplomatic agents to the Barbary coast to purchase the friendship of its rulers, and had taken our place in the line of regular contributors. We were in good company, too, for England, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Denmark, and the Italian states had been paying tribute so long that they had acquired the habit. Think of it, my friends! Every great seafaring

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nation in the world meekly paying tribute to a few thousand Arab cutthroats for the privilege of using one of the seven seas, and humbly apologizing if the payment happened to become overdue!

Our friendly relations with the Dey of Algiers were of short duration, however, and by 1793 his swift-sailing, heavily armed cruisers had captured thirteen American vessels, and sixscore American slaves were at work on the fortifications of his capital. In his prison-yard, indeed, one could hear every American inflection, from the nasal twang of Maine to the drawl of Carolina. After two years of procrastination, Congress, spurred to action by public indignation, purchased the liberty of the captives and peace with Algiers for eight hundred thousand dollars, though the Dey remarked gloomily, as he scrawled his Arabic flourish at the foot of the treaty: "If I keep on making peace at this rate, there will soon be no one left to fight. Then how shall I occupy my corsairs? What shall I do with my fighting men? If they have no one else to rob and slaughter, they will rob and slaughter me!"

The Bashaw of Tripoli at this time was a peculiarly insolent and tyrannical Arab named Yussuf Karamanli, who had gained the throne by the

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effective method of winning over the body-guard, quietly surrounding the palace one night, and deposing his elder brother, Ahmet, whom he promptly exiled. Despite the annual tribute of twenty-two thousand dollars which we were paying to the Bashaw, not to mention the seventeen thousand dollars' worth of presents which we presented biennially to the officers and officials of his court, he complained most bitterly to the American consul at Tripoli that he was not getting as much as his neighboring rulers, and that unless the matter was remedied immediately, he would have to get some American slaves to teach him English. Now, Yussuf was a bad man to have for an enemy, for his cruisers were numerous and loaded to the gun-wales with pirates who would rather fight than eat, and he had, in addition, the reputation of being most inconsiderate to those sailors who fell into his hands, sometimes going so far as to wall a few of them up in the fortifications which he was constantly building. To put it bluntly, he was not popular outside of his own circle. As Mr. Cathcart, the American consul, did not take his demands for a larger tribute very seriously, the Bashaw wrote to President Jefferson direct, mincing no words in saying that the American government had better grant his request, and be

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quick about it, or American seamen would find the Mediterranean exceedingly unhealthy for them.

Incredible as it may seem in this day and age, the authorities at Washington ordered a vessel to be loaded with the arms, ammunition, and naval stores demanded by the Bashaw, their total value being thirty-four thousand dollars, and hurriedly despatched it to Tripoli, with profuse apologies for the delay. A few months later the Bashaw, who evidently knew a good thing when he saw it, suggested that a token of our esteem for him in the form of jewels would be highly acceptable, whereupon the American minister in London was instructed to purchase jewelry to the value of ten thousand dollars and have it hurried to Tripoli by special messenger. Emboldened by his undreamed-of success in shaking the republican tree, the Bashaw reached the very height of audacity by again sending a peremptory note to President Jefferson, demanding that the United States immediately present him with a thirty-six-gun warship! As no attention was paid to this modest request (and in view of the other outrageous concessions made by our government, it is somewhat surprising that this demand was not granted also), the Bashaw ordered the flagstaff of the American consulate to be chopped down as a sign of war,

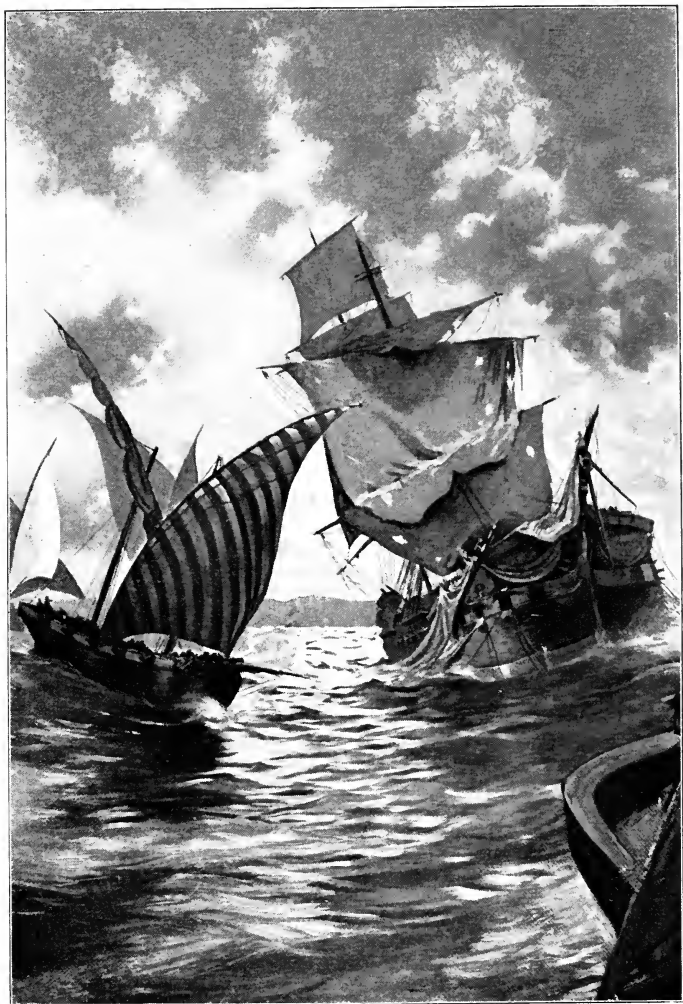
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and turned his corsairs loose on American commerce in the Mediterranean. The war opened most disastrously for the United States, for a few months later the frigate *Philadelphia* ran aground in the harbor of Tripoli, the Tripolitans capturing Captain Bainbridge and his entire crew. No wonder the Bashaw went to the mosque that day to give thanks to Allah, for had he not received an even larger war-ship than he had demanded, and did he not have two hundred American slaves to instruct him in the English tongue? "God is great!" exclaimed the Bashaw devoutly, as he knelt on his silken prayer-rug, and "God is great!" echoed the rows of corsairs who knelt behind him.

It was shortly after this American misfortune that William Eaton, soldier, diplomat, and Indian-fighter, swaggered upon the scene, and things began to happen with a rapidity that made the Bashaw's turbaned head whirl. By birth and upbringing Eaton was a Connecticut Yankee, and he possessed all the shrewdness, hardihood, and perseverance so characteristic of that race. The son of a schoolmaster farmer, before he was sixteen he had run away from home to join the Continental Army, which he left at the close of the Revolution with the chevrons of a sergeant on his

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coat-sleeve. Far-sighted enough to see the value of a college education, he went from the camp straight to the college classroom. Graduating from Dartmouth in 1790, he re-entered the army as a captain, served against the Indians in Georgia and Ohio, and in 1798 received an appointment as American consul at Tunis. Resolute, energetic, and daring, impatient with any one who did not agree with his views, no better man could have been selected for the place. Thoroughly understanding the Arab character, from the very outset he took a high hand in his dealings with the Tunisian ruler. He alternately quarrelled with and patronized the Bey, bullyragged his ministers, and actually horsewhipped an insolent official of the court in the palace courtyard, for five years keeping up an uninterrupted series of altercations, provocations, and procrastinations over the payment of tribute-money. He acted with such energy and boldness, however, that he secured to the commerce of his country complete immunity from the attacks of Tunisian cruisers, and made the name American respected on that part of the Barbary coast at least. In 1801, as I have already remarked, the American flagstaff in the adjoining kingdom of Tripoli came crashing down at the Bashaw's order, and war promptly began



The frigate *Philadelphia* ran aground in the harbor of Tripoli, the Tripolitans capturing Captain Bainbridge and his entire crew.





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between that country and the United States. Two years later the Bey of Tunis, harried beyond endurance by the half-insolent, half-patronizing fashion in which Eaton treated him, ordered that gentleman to leave the country.

Returning to the United States, Eaton went immediately to Washington and laid before President Jefferson and his Cabinet a scheme for bringing the war with Tripoli to a successful conclusion, and exchanging our humiliating position as a contributor to a gang of pirates for one more consistent with American ideals. The plan which he proposed was, briefly, that the United States should assist in restoring to the Tripolitan throne the exiled Bashaw, Ahmet Karamanli, on the understanding that, upon his restoration, the exaction of tribute from the American government and the depredations on American commerce should cease. Eaton was outspoken in urging the desirability of carrying out this plan, arguing that the dethronement of one of the Barbary despots would impress the people of all that region as nothing else could do. I can see him standing there beside the long table in the Cabinet room of the White House, his lean Yankee face aglow with enthusiasm, his every motion bespeaking confidence in himself and his plan, while Jefferson and

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his sedate, conservative advisers lean far back in their chairs and regard this visionary half curiously, half amusedly, as he outlines his schemes for overturning thrones and reapportioning kingdoms. From the President and his Cabinet he received the sort of treatment which timid governments are apt to bestow on men of spirit and action. He was given to understand that he was at liberty to carry out his plans, but that, if he was successful, the government would take all the credit, and that, if he failed, he would have to take all the blame. The only way to explain the astounding apathy of the American government to events in the Mediterranean is that a bitter political struggle was then in progress in the United States, and that the very remoteness of the theatre of war probably lessened its importance in the eyes of the administration. At any rate, President Jefferson signed the appointment of Eaton as American naval agent in the Mediterranean, and, happy as a schoolboy at the beginning of the long vacation, at the wide latitude of action conferred upon him by this purposely vague commission, he sailed a few days later with the American fleet for Egypt. His great adventure had begun.

Aware that the dethroned Bashaw had fled to Cairo, Eaton landed at Alexandria, and, hastening

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to the Egyptian capital by camel, succeeded in locating the exiled Ahmet, whom he found in the depths of poverty and despair. Seated cross-legged beside him in a native coffee-house, Eaton outlined his plan and proposition. He told Ahmet that the United States would undertake to restore him to the Tripolitan throne upon his agreeing to repay the expenses of the expedition immediately upon his restoration, and upon the condition that Eaton should be commander-in-chief of the land forces throughout the campaign, Ahmet and his followers to promise him implicit obedience. Ahmet snapped at the chance, slim though it was, to regain his kingdom, as a starving dog snaps at a proffered bone. Eaton's plan of campaign was as simple as it was reckless. He proposed to recruit a force of Greek and Arab mercenaries, officered by Americans, in Alexandria, and, following the North African coast-line westward across the Libyan Desert, to surprise and capture Derna (or, as it was spelled in those days, Derne), the capital of the easternmost and richest province of Tripoli. With Derna as a base of operations, and with the co-operation of the American fleet, he held that it would be a comparatively simple matter to push on along the coast, taking in turn Benghazi, Tobruk, and the city of Tripoli itself.

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The chief merit of the scheme lay in its sheer audacity, for of all the leaders who have invaded Africa, this unknown American was the only one who had the courage to face the perils of a march across a waterless, trackless, sun-scorched, and uninhabited desert. But there was in Eaton the stuff of which great conquerors are made, and instead of letting his mind dwell on the dangers which the desert had to offer, he dreamed of the triumphs which awaited him beyond it.

To raise the men for so hazardous an expedition, Eaton had need of all the energy and magnetism at his command, alternately employing the specious promises of a recruiting sergeant and the persuasive arguments of a campaign orator. On March 3, 1805, Eaton and the man to whom he had promised a kingdom reviewed their forlorn hope—and it was very forlorn indeed—at a spot called the Arab's Tower, some forty miles southwest of Alexandria. I doubt if so strangely assorted a force ever marched and fought under the shadow of our flag. The army, if army it could be called, consisted of eight Americans besides Eaton: Lieutenant O'Barron, Sergeant Peck, and six marines borrowed from the American fleet; thirty-four Greeks, who went along professedly because they wanted to fight the Moslem, but really because

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they needed the money; twenty-five Egyptian Copts, Christians at least in name, who claimed to be trained artillerymen, and to lend color to their assertion brought with them a small brass field-gun; those of Ahmet's personal adherents who had fled with him into exile, numbering about ninety men; and a squadron of Arab mercenaries, whose services had been obtained by the promise of unlimited opportunities for loot—these with the drivers of the baggage-camels bringing the total strength of the "Army of North Africa" to less than four hundred men. With this motley and ill-disciplined force behind him, and six hundred miles of yellow sand in front, Eaton turned his horse's nose Tripoliward, so that at about the time President Jefferson was delivering his second inaugural address the adventurous American was leading his little army across the desert, with the courage of an Alexander the Great, to conquer an African kingdom.

The task which lay before him was one which great military leaders, all down the ages, had declared impossible. For a distance equal to that from Philadelphia to Chicago stretched an unbroken expanse of pitiless, sun-scorched desert, boasting no single living thing save an occasional band of nomad Arabs or a herd of gazelles. Mid-

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way between Alexandria and Derna was the insignificant port of Bomba, where, according to a prearranged plan, the *Argus*, under Captain Isaac Hull—the same who became famous a few years later for his victories over the British in the War of 1812—was to meet the expedition with supplies. Unless you have seen the desert it will be difficult for you to appreciate how hazardous this adventure really was. Imagine a sea of yellow sand with billow after billow stretching in every direction as far as the eye can see; without a tree, a shrub, a plant, a blade of grass; without a river, a brook, a drop of water except, at long intervals, a stagnant, green-scummed pool; the air like a blast from an open furnace-door and overhead a sky pitiless as molten brass! During the seven weeks of the march the thermometer never dropped during the day below 120 degrees.

The arrangements for the transport had been left to Ahmet Pasha, and it was not until the expedition was two hundred miles into the desert, and the camel-drivers abruptly halted and announced that they were going back to Egypt, that Eaton learned that they had been engaged only to that point. As the desertion of the camel-drivers and the consequent inability to transport the tents, ammunition, and supplies would wreck the expe-

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dition, Eaton pleaded with the men to stick by him two or three days longer, until he could reach an encampment of Arabs with whom he could make another contract. This they consented to do on condition that they were paid in advance. By borrowing every piaster which his Americans and Greeks had to lend, Eaton succeeded in raising six hundred and seventy-three dollars, and with this the camel-drivers were apparently content. Nothing shows more strikingly the shoe-string on which the enterprise was being run than the fact that this unexpected disbursement reduced Eaton's war-chest to three Venetian sequins—equivalent to six dollars and fifty-four cents! Despite this payment, all but four of the camel-drivers deserted the very next night, and the four that remained sullenly refused to go any farther. In the darkness of the following night they, too, quietly untethered their camels and slipped silently away. Here, then, were three hundred and fifty men, with a rapidly diminishing supply of food and water and absolutely no means of transport, as completely marooned as though they were on a desert island.

To make matters worse, if such a thing were possible, Eaton learned that Ahmet had induced his Tripolitans and the Arabs to refuse to advance

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until they had news of the arrival of the *Argus* at Bomba. Eaton, striding across to Ahmet's tent, shook his fist menacingly in the face of the cringing Tripolitan. "I know you're a coward," said he, "and I suspect that you're a traitor and I've a damned good mind to have you shot." The Pasha, now thoroughly frightened, replied that his men were too tired to march any farther. "You can take your choice between marching and starving," Eaton retorted, turning on his heel, and placing a guard of American marines around the tent containing the provisions, he ordered them to shoot the first Arab who approached it. This resolute action had an immediate effect, for the Pasha and his men lost their tired feeling with amazing quickness, fifty of the camel-drivers returned, and the desperate march was resumed. It was but a day or two, however, before the Arabs became as turbulent and unruly as ever. Then another mutiny broke out, Ahmet and his people announcing that they preferred to be well-fed cowards rather than starved heroes, and that they were going back to the flesh-pots of Egypt forthwith. Just as they were on the point of departure, however, a messenger who had been despatched to Bomba reached camp with the news that the *Argus* was awaiting them in the



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harbor. These unexpected delays had wholly exhausted the supplies, which were slim enough, goodness knows, in the beginning, so that during the remainder of the march to Bomba they were compelled to kill some of the camels for food, living upon them and upon such roots as they could gather on the way.

It was a half-starved and utterly exhausted expedition that plodded up the sand dunes which overlook the little port of Bomba, so what must their despair have been when they found no vessel awaiting them in the harbor, and that the town itself had been deserted. Captain Hull, apparently having given them up as lost, had departed. This time a more serious mutiny occurred, the Arabs, desperate with hunger and furious from disappointment, preparing to attack Eaton and his handful of Europeans. Appreciating the peril of his position, Eaton hastily formed his men into a hollow square. Just as the Arabs were preparing to charge down upon them the musket of one of the marines was prematurely discharged, the bullet whistling in uncomfortable proximity to the Pasha's ear. So terror-stricken was that worthy that he called off his men and attempted to parley with Eaton, who, standing alone well in front of his command, relieved his mind by telling

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Ahmet his opinion of him in what, according to the accounts of those who heard it, must have been an epic in objugation. While the two factions were growling at each other like angry bulldogs one of the Americans, happening to glance seaward, suddenly broke the dangerous tension by shouting: "A sail! A sail!" Hull, true to his promise, was returning, and the expedition was saved. Supplies were quickly landed from the *Argus* for the starving men; with full stomachs the courage of the Arabs returned, and Eaton and his little band once more turned their faces toward the setting sun.

On the evening of April 25 the vanguard sighted the walls of Derna. A feat that veteran soldiers had jeered at as impossible had been accomplished, and Eaton, without the loss of a man, had brought his army across six hundred miles of desert, in the heat of an African spring, and in the remarkable time, when the scantiness of the rations and the many delays are considered, of fifty-two days. With their goal actually in sight, still another mutiny took place, the craven Arabs claiming that they were too few in number to attempt the capture of a walled and heavily garrisoned city, and it was not until Eaton promised them a bonus of two thousand dollars if they succeeded in taking

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it that they could be induced to advance. The more one learns of this man the more one must admire his unfailing resource, his tenacity of purpose, and his bull-dog courage; for, in addition to the appalling natural obstacles which he overcame, he was constantly harried by intrigue, treachery, and cowardice.

On the morning of the 26th a message was sent to the governor of Derna, under a flag of truce, offering him full amnesty if he would surrender and declare his allegiance to his rightful sovereign, Ahmet. The answer that came back was as curt as it was conclusive: "My head or yours," it read. Just as the sun was rising above the sand-dunes the following morning the *Argus*, the *Nautilus*, and the *Hornet* swept grandly into the harbor, their crews at quarters, their decks cleared for action, and the red-white-and-blue ensign of the oversea republic floating defiantly from their main trucks. Under cover of a terrific bombardment by the war-ships, Eaton's force advanced upon the city, planning, with their single field-piece, to effect a breach in the walls and carry the place by storm. So murderous was the fire that the Tripolitan riflemen poured into them from the walls and housetops, however, that they were thrown into confusion, their single

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piece of artillery was put out of action by a well-directed cannon-shot, and Eaton himself was severely wounded. Seeing that his raw troops were on the verge of panic, and knowing that his only chance of holding them together lay in a charge, Eaton ordered his buglers to sound the advance, and with a cheer like the roar of a storm his whole line—Americans, Greeks, and Arabs—swept forward on a run. “Come on, boys!” shouted Eaton, as he raced ahead, sword in one hand, pistol in the other. “At the double! Follow me! Follow me!” And follow him they did. Cheering like madmen they crossed a field swept by a withering rifle-fire. They clambered over the ramparts, and by the very fury of their assault drove back the defenders, who outnumbered them twenty to one. They fought with them hand to hand, sabre against cimeter, bayonet against clubbed matchlock. Swarming into the batteries, they cut down the gunners and turned their guns upon the town. The defences of the city once in his possession, Eaton directed an assault upon the palace, where the governor had taken refuge, utilizing his Arab cavalry meanwhile to cut off the retreat of the flying garrison. Before the sun had disappeared into the Mediterranean, Eaton, at a cost of only fourteen killed and wounded (all of

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whom, by the way, were Americans and Greeks), had made himself master of Derna. His moment of triumph came when, still begrimed with dirt and powder, his arm in a blood-stained sling, he stood with drawn sword before the line formed by his ragged soldiers and the trim bluejackets from the fleet, and, watching a ball of bunting creep up that palace flagstaff from which so recently had flaunted the banner of Tripoli, saw it suddenly break out into the Stars and Stripes. Our flag, for the first and only time, flew above a fortification on that side of the Atlantic.

Reinforced by a party of bluejackets from the fleet, Eaton wasted not a moment in preparing the city for defence. He was none too soon, either, for the Bashaw, learning of the loss of his richest province, despatched an overwhelming force for its recapture. This army arrived before the walls of Derna on May 13, and immediately made an assault, which Eaton repulsed, as he did a second one a few weeks later. By this time the news of Eaton's victory had spread across North Africa as fire spreads in dry grass, and thousands of natives, many of them deserters from the Bashaw's forces, hastened to assert their undying loyalty and to offer their services to Ahmet, for your Arab is far-seeing and takes good care to be

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found on the side which he believes to be the winning one. With his army thus largely augmented, with ample supplies, with Derna as a base of operations, and with his own prestige equivalent to an additional regiment, Eaton had completed the preparations for continuing his victorious advance along the African coast-line. There is little doubt, indeed, that with the cooperation of the fleet he could have marched on to Benghazi, taken that city as easily as he did Derna, and in due time planted the American flag on the castle of Tripoli itself.

So it was with undisguised amazement and indignation that on June 12 he received orders from Commodore Rodgers to evacuate Derna and to withdraw his forces from Tripoli, Colonel Tobias Lear, the American consul at Algiers, having, in the face of Eaton's successes, signed an inglorious treaty of peace with the Bashaw of Tripoli. No more degrading terms were ever assented to by a civilized power. The Bashaw at first demanded two hundred thousand dollars for the release of Bainbridge and the *Philadelphia's* crew, but as Eaton had captured a large number of Tripolitans in the storming of Derna, an exchange was eventually arranged, the United States agreeing to pay the pirate ruler sixty thousand dollars to boot.

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The city of Derna and the great province of which it was the capital were surrendered without so much as the mention of an equivalent, not even the relinquishment of the ransom of the American prisoners. The unfortunate Ahmet Pasha, who had been decoyed from his refuge in Egypt on the promise of American assistance in effecting his restoration, was deserted at a moment when success was actually ours, and had to fly for his life to Sicily, his wife and children being held as hostages by his brother and the heads of his adherents being exposed on the walls of the Tripolitan capital. Thus shamefully ended one of the most gallant and romantic exploits in the history of American arms; thus terminated an episode which, more than any other agency, compelled the rulers of the Barbary coast to respect the citizens and fear the wrath of the United States. Though an expedition of scarcely four hundred men may sound insignificant, the humbling of a Barbary power was an achievement which every European nation had attempted and which none of them had accomplished.

Disappointed and disgusted, Eaton returned to the United States in November, 1805, to find himself a national hero. From the moment he set his foot on American soil he was greeted with

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cheers wherever he appeared; it was "roses, roses all the way." The cities of Washington and Richmond honored him with public dinners; Massachusetts, "desirous to perpetuate the remembrance of an heroic enterprise," granted him ten thousand acres of land in Maine; Boston named a street after the city which he had captured against such fearful odds; President Jefferson lauded him in his annual message; and in recognition of his services in effecting the release of some Danish captives in Tripoli, he was presented by the King of Denmark with a jewelled snuff-box. He was complimented everywhere except at the seat of government, and received every honor except that which he most deserved—a vote of thanks from Congress. Though his expedition had involved an expense of twenty-three thousand dollars, for which he had given his personal notes and the repayment of which exhausted all his means, Congress never reimbursed him. Notwithstanding the astounding indifference and ingratitude of the nation on whose flag he had shed such lustre, he indignantly rejected the advances of Aaron Burr, who tried ineffectually to enlist him in his conspiracy to establish an empire beyond the Mississippi, and died, poverty-stricken and broken-hearted, on June 1, 1811. Though

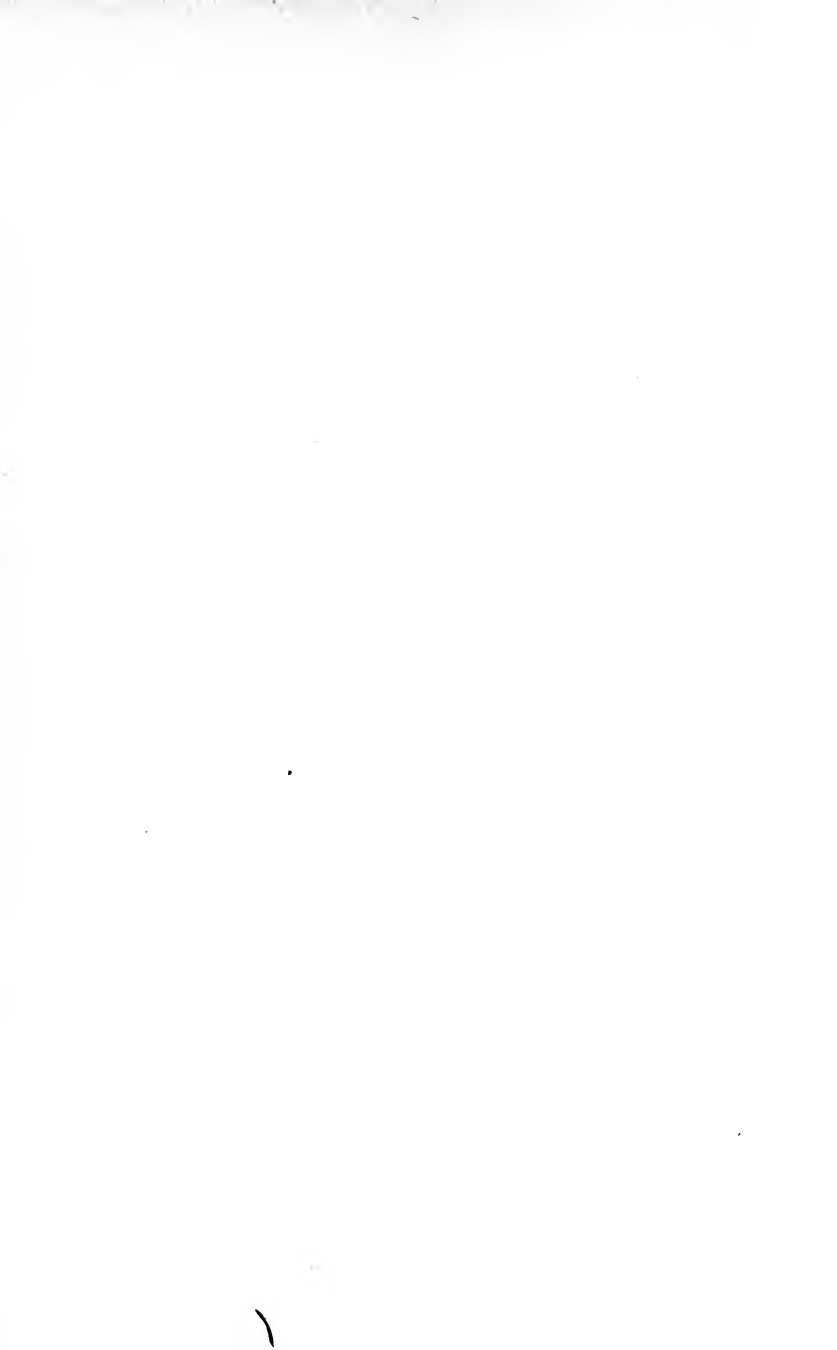


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the most modest of monuments marks his resting-place in Brimfield churchyard, and though not one in a hundred thousand of his countrymen have so much as heard his name, his fame still lives in that wild and far-off region where it took an Italian army of forty thousand men to repeat the exploit which he accomplished with four hundred.



**THE LAST FIGHT OF THE "GENERAL  
ARMSTRONG"**



## THE LAST FIGHT OF THE "GENERAL ARMSTRONG"

WE leaned over the rail of the *Hamburg*, Colonel Roosevelt and I, and watched the olive hills of Fayal rise from the turquoise sea. Houses white as chalk began to peep from among the orange groves; what looked at first sight to be a yellow snake turned into a winding road; then we rounded a headland, and the U-shaped harbor, edged by a sleepy town and commanded by a crumbling fortress, lay before us. "In there," said the ex-President, pointing eagerly as our anchor rumbled down, "was waged one of the most desperate sea-fights ever fought, and one of the least known; in there lies the wreck of the *General Armstrong*, the privateer that stood off twenty times her strength in British men and guns, and thereby saved Louisiana from invasion. It is a story that should make the thrills of patriotism run up and down the back of every right-thinking American."

Everything about her, from the carved and gilded figure-head, past the rakish, slanting masts

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to the slender stern, indicated the privateer. As she stood into the roadstead of Fayal late in the afternoon of September 26, 1814, black-hulled and white-sparred, carrying an amazing spread of snowy canvas, she made a picture that brought a grunt of approval even from the surly Azorian pilot. Hardly had the red-white-and-blue ensign showing her nationality fluttered to her peak before a harbor skiff bearing the American consul, Dabney, shot out from shore; for these were troublous times on the Atlantic, and letters from the States were few and far between. Rounding her stern, he read, with a thrill of pride, "*General Armstrong, New York.*"

The very name stood for romance, valor, hair-breadth escape. For of all the two-hundred-odd privateers that put out from American ports at the outbreak of the War of 1812 to prey on British commerce, none had won so high a place in the popular imagination as this trim-built, black-hulled schooner. Built for speed, and carrying a spread of canvas at which most skippers would have stood aghast, she was the fastest and best-handled privateer afloat, and had always been able to show her heels to the enemy on the rare occasions when the superior range of her seven guns had failed to pound him into submission. Her

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list of captures had made rich men of her owners, and had caused Lloyd's to raise the insurance on a vessel merely crossing the English Channel to thirteen guineas in the hundred.

The story of her desperate encounter off the mouth of the Surinam River with the British sloop of war *Coquette*, with four times her weight in guns, had fired the popular imagination as had few other events of the war. Although her commander, Samuel Chester Reid, was not long past his thirtieth birthday, no more skilful navigator or daring fighter ever trod a quarter-deck, and his crew of ninety men—Down-East fishermen, old man-o'-war's men, Creole privateersmen who had fought under Lafitte, reckless adventurers of every sort and kind—would have warmed the heart of bluff old John Paul Jones himself.

Just as dusk was falling the officer on watch reported a sail in the offing, and Reid and the consul, hurrying on deck, made out the British brig *Carnation*, of eighteen guns, with two other war-vessels in her wake: the thirty-eight-gun frigate *Rota*, and the *Plantagenet*, of seventy-four. Now, as the privateer lay in the innermost harbor, where a dead calm prevailed, while the three British ships were fast approaching before the brisk breeze which was blowing outside, Reid, who knew the line which marks foolhardiness from

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courage, appreciating that the chances of his being able to hoist anchor, make sail, and get out of the harbor before the British squadron arrived to block the entrance were almost infinitesimal, decided to stay where he was and trust to the neutrality of the port, a decision that was confirmed by the assurances of Consul Dabney that the British would not dare to attack a vessel lying in a friendly harbor. But therein the consul was mistaken, for throughout the entire duration of the war the British as cynically disregarded the observance of international law and the rights of neutrals as though they did not exist.

The *Carnation*, learning the identity of the American vessel from the pilot, hauled close into the harbor, not letting go her anchor until she was within pistol-shot of the *General Armstrong*. Instantly a string of signal-flags fluttered from her mast, and the message was promptly acknowledged by her approaching consorts, which thereupon proceeded to stand off and on across the mouth of the harbor, thus barring any chance of the privateer making her escape. So great was the commotion which ensued on the *Carnation's* deck that Reid, becoming suspicious of the Englishman's good faith, warped his ship under the very guns of the Portuguese fort.

About eight o'clock, just as dark had fallen,



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Captain Reid saw four boats slip silently from the shadow of the *Carnation* and pull toward him with muffled oars. If anything more were needed to convince him of their hostile intentions, the moon at that moment appeared from behind a cloud and was reflected by the scores of cutlasses and musket-barrels in all four of the approaching boats. As they came within hailing distance Reid swung himself into the shrouds.

"Boats there!" he shouted, making a trumpet of his hands. "Come no nearer! For your own safety I warn you!"

At his hail the boats halted, as though in indecision, and their commanders held a whispered consultation. Then, apparently deciding to take the risk, and hoping, no doubt, to catch the privateer unprepared, they gave the order: "Give way all!" The oars caught the water together, and the four boats, loaded to the gunwales with sailors and marines, came racing on.

"Let 'em have it, boys!" roared Reid, and at the word a stream of flame leaped from the dark side of the privateer and a torrent of grape swept the crowded boats, almost annihilating one of the crews and sending the others, crippled and bleeding, back to the shelter of their ship.

By this time the moon had fully risen, and

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showed the heights overlooking the harbor to be black with spectators, among whom were the Portuguese governor and his staff; but the castle, either from weakness or fear, showed no signs of resenting the outrageous breach of neutrality to which the port had been subjected. Angered and chagrined at their repulse, the British now threw all caution aside. The long-boats and gigs of all three ships were lowered, and into them were crowded nearly four hundred men, armed with muskets, pistols, and cutlasses. Reid, seeing that an attack was to be made in force, proceeded to warp his vessel still closer inshore, mooring her stem and stern within a few rods of the castle. Moving two of the nine-pounders across the deck, and cutting ports for them in the bulwarks, he brought five guns, in addition to his famous "long tom," to bear on the enemy. With cannon double-shotted, boarding-nets triced up, and decks cleared for action, the crew of the *General Armstrong* lay down beside their guns to await the British attack.

It was not long in coming. Just as the bells of the old Portuguese cathedral boomed twelve a dozen boats, loaded to the water's edge with sailors and marines, whose burnished weapons were like so many mirrors under the rays of the

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moon, swung around a promontory behind which they had been forming and, with measured stroke of oars, came sweeping down upon the lone privateer. The decks of the *General Armstrong* were black and silent, but round each gun clustered its crew of half-naked gunners, and behind the bulwarks knelt a line of cool, grim riflemen, eyes sighting down their barrels, cheeks pressed close against the butts. Up and down behind his men paced Reid, the skipper, cool as a winter's morning.

"Hold your fire until I give the word, boys," he cautioned quietly. "Wait till they get within range, and then teach 'em better manners."

Nearer and nearer came the shadowy line of boats, the oars rising and falling with the faultless rhythm which marks the veteran man-o'-war's man. On they came, and now the waiting Americans could make out the gilt-lettered hat-bands of the bluejackets and the white cross-belts and the brass buttons on the tunics of the marines. A moment more and those on the *Armstrong's* deck could see, beneath the shadow of the leather shakoos, the tense, white faces of the British boarders.

"Now, boys!" roared Captain Reid; "let 'em have it for the honor of the flag!" and from the side of the privateer leaped a blast of flame and

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lead, cannon and musketry crashing in chorus. Never were men taken more completely by surprise than were those British sailors, for they had expected that Reid, relying on the neutrality of the port, would be quite unprepared to resist them. But, though the American fire had caused terrible havoc in the crowded boats, with the bull-dog courage for which the British sailors were justly famous, they kept indomitably on. "Give way! Give way all!" screamed the boy-coxswains, and in the face of a withering rifle-fire the sailors, recovering from their momentary panic, bent grimly to their oars. Through a perfect hail-storm of lead, right up to the side of the privateer, they swept. Six boats made fast to her quarter and six more to her bow. "Boarders up and away!" bellowed the officers, hacking desperately at the nettings with their swords, and firing their pistols point-blank into the faces they saw above them. The *Armstrong's* gunners, unable to depress the muzzles of their guns enough so that they could be brought to bear, lifted the solid shot and dropped them from the rail into the British boats, mangling their crews and crashing through their bottoms. From the shelter of the bulwarks the American riflemen fired and loaded and fired again, while the negro cook and his assistant

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played their part in the defence by pouring kettles of boiling water over the British who were attempting to scramble up the sides, sending them back into their boats again scalded and groaning with pain.

There has been no fiercer struggle in all the annals of the sea. The Yankee gunners, some of them gray-haired men who had seen service with John Paul Jones in the *Bon Homme Richard*, changed from cannon-balls to grape, and from grape to bags of bullets, so that by the time the British boats drew alongside they were little more than floating shambles. The dark waters of the harbor were lighted up by spurts of flame from muskets and cannon; the high, shrill yell of the Yankee privateersmen rose above the deep-throated hurrahs of the English sailors; the air was filled with the shouts and oaths of the combatants, the shrieks and groans of the wounded, the incessant trampling of struggling men upon the decks, the splash of dead and injured falling overboard, the clash and clang of steel on steel, and all the savage, overwhelming turmoil of a struggle to the death. Urged on by their officers' cries of "No quarter! Give the Yankees no quarter!" the British division which had attacked the bow hacked its way through the nettings, and succeeded

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by sheer weight of numbers in getting a footing on the deck, all three of the American lieutenants being killed or disabled in the terrific hand-to-hand struggle that ensued.

At this critical juncture, when the Americans on the forecastle, their officers fallen and their guns dismounted, were being pressed slowly back by overwhelming numbers, Captain Reid, having repulsed the attack on the *Armstrong's* quarter, led the after division forward at a run, the privateersmen, though outnumbered five to one, driving the English overboard with the resistless fury of their onset. As the British boats, now laden with dead and dying, attempted to withdraw into safety, they were raked again and again with showers of lead; two of them sank, two of them were captured by the Americans. Finally, with nearly three hundred of their men—three-quarters of the cutting-out force—dead or wounded, the British, now cowed and discouraged, pulled slowly and painfully out of range. Some of the most brilliant victories the British navy has ever gained were far less dearly purchased.

At three in the morning Reid received a note from Consul Dabney asking him to come ashore. He then learned that the governor had sent a letter to the British commander asking him to

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desist from further hostilities, as several buildings in the town had been injured by the British fire and a number of the inhabitants wounded. To this request Captain Lloyd had rudely replied that he would have the Yankee privateer if he had to knock the town into a heap of ruins. Returning on board, Reid ordered the dead and wounded taken ashore, and told the crew to save their personal belongings.

At daybreak the *Carnation*, being of lighter draught than the other vessels, stood close in for a third attack, opening on the privateer with every gun she could bring to bear. But even in those days the fame of American gunners was as wide as the seas, and so well did the crew of the *General Armstrong* uphold their reputation that the *Carnation* was compelled to beat a demoralized retreat, with her rigging cut away, her foremast about to fall, and with several gaping holes between wind and water. But Reid, appreciating that there was absolutely no chance of escape, and recognizing that further resistance would entail an unnecessary sacrifice of his men's lives, by which nothing could be gained, ordered the crew to throw the nine-pounders which had rendered such valiant service overboard and to leave the ship. The veteran gunners, who were as much at-

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tached to their great black guns as a cavalryman is to his horse, obeyed the order with tears ploughing furrows down their powder-begrimed cheeks. Then Reid with his own hand trained the long-tom down his vessel's hatchway, and pulling the lanyard sent a charge of grape crashing through her bottom, from which she at once began to sink. Ten minutes later, before a British crew could reach her side, the *General Armstrong* went to the bottom with her flag still defiantly flying.

Few battles have been fought in which the odds were so unequal, and in few battles have the relative losses been so astounding. The three British war-ships carried two thousand men and one hundred and thirty guns, and of the four hundred men who composed the boarding party they lost, according to their own accounts, nearly three hundred killed and wounded. Of the American crew of ninety men, two were killed and seven wounded. This little crew of privateersmen had, in other words, put out of action more than three times their own number of British, and had added one more laurel to our chaplet of triumphs on the sea.

The Americans had scarcely gained the shore before Captain Lloyd—who, by the way, had been so severely wounded in the leg that amputation was necessary—sent a peremptory message to the





But even in those days the fame of American gunners was as wide as the seas.



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governor demanding their surrender. But the men who could not be taken at sea were not the men to be captured on land, and the Americans, retreating to the mountainous centre of the island, took possession of a thick-walled convent, over which they hoisted the stars and stripes, and from which they defied British and Portuguese alike to come and take them. No one tried.

All of the following day was spent by the British in burying their one hundred and twenty dead—you can see the white gravestones to-day if you will take the trouble to climb the hill behind the little town—but it took them a week to repair the damage caused by the battle. And so deep was their chagrin and mortification that when two British ships put into Fayal a few days later, and were ordered to take home the wounded, they were forbidden to carry any news of the disaster back to England.

To Captain Reid and his little band of fighters is due in no small measure the credit of saving New Orleans from capture and Louisiana from invasion. Lloyd's squadron was a part of the expedition then gathering at Pensacola for the invasion of the South, but it was so badly crippled in its encounter with the privateer that it did not reach the Gulf of Mexico until ten days later than

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the expedition had planned to sail. The expedition waited for Lloyd and his reinforcements, so that when it finally approached New Orleans, Jackson and his frontiersmen, who had hastened down by forced marches from the North, had made preparations to give the English a warm reception. Had the expedition arrived ten days earlier it would have found the Americans unprepared, and New Orleans would have fallen.

Captain Reid and his men, landing on their native soil at Savannah, found their journey northward turned into a triumphal progress. The whole country went wild with enthusiasm. There was not a town or village on the way but did them honor. The city of Richmond gave Captain Reid a great banquet, and the State of New York presented him with a sword of honor. But of all the tributes which were paid to the little band of heroes, none had the flavor of the concluding line of a letter written by one of the British officers engaged in the action to a relative in England. "If this is the way the Americans fight," he wrote, "we may well say, 'God deliver us from our enemies.'"

**THE PIRATE WHO TURNED PATRIOT**



## THE PIRATE WHO TURNED PATRIOT

**H**OW many well-informed people are aware, I wonder, that the fact that the American flag, and not the British, flies to-day over the Mississippi valley is largely due to the eleventh-hour patriotism of a pirate? Of the many kinds of men of many nationalities who have played parts of greater or less importance in the making of our national history, none is more completely cloaked in mystery, romance, and adventure than Jean Lafitte. The last of that long line of buccaneers who for more than two centuries terrorized the waters and ravaged the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico, his exploits make the wildest fiction appear commonplace and tame. Although he was as thorough-going a pirate as ever plundered an honest merchant-man, I do not mean to imply that he was a leering, low-browed scoundrel, with a red bandanna twisted about his head and an armory of assorted weapons at his waist, for he was nothing of the sort. On the contrary, from all I can learn about him, he appears to have been

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a very gentlemanly sort of person indeed, tall and graceful and soft-voiced, and having the most charming manners. Though he regarded the law with unconcealed contempt, there came a crisis in our national history when he placed patriotism above all other considerations, and rendered an inestimable service to the country whose laws he had flouted and to the State which had set a price on his head. Indeed, we are indebted to Jean Lafitte in scarcely less measure than we are to Andrew Jackson for frustrating the British invasion and conquest of Louisiana.

Though the palmy days of piracy in the Gulf of Mexico really ended with the seventeenth century, by which time the rich cities of Middle America had been impoverished by repeated sackings and the gold-freighted caravels had taken to travelling under convoy, even at the beginning of the nineteenth century these storied waters still offered many opportunities to lawless and enterprising sea-folk. But the pirates of the nineteenth century, unlike their forerunners of the seventeenth, preyed on slave-ships rather than on treasure-galleons. Consider the facts. On January 1, 1808, Congress passed an act prohibiting the further importation of slaves into the United States. By this act the recently acquired terri-



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tory of Louisiana, over which prosperity was advancing in three-league boots, was deprived of its supply of labor. With crops rotting in the fields for lack of laborers, the price of slaves rose until a negro fresh from the coast of Africa would readily bring a thousand dollars at auction in New Orleans. At the same time, remember, shiploads of slaves were being brought to Cuba, where no such restrictions existed, and sold for three hundred dollars a head. Under such conditions smuggling was inevitable. At first the smugglers bought their slaves in the Cuban market, and running them across the Gulf of Mexico, landed them at obscure harbors on the Louisiana coast, whence they were marched overland to New Orleans and Baton Rouge. The smugglers soon saw, however, that the slavers carried small crews, poorly armed, and quickly made up their minds that it was a shameful waste of money to buy slaves when they could get them for nothing by the menace of their guns. In short, the smugglers became buccaneers, and as such drove a thriving business in captured cargoes of "black ivory," as the slaves were euphemistically called.

As the demand was greatest on the rich new lands along the Mississippi, it was at New Orleans that the buccaneers found the most profitable

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market for their human wares, for they could easily sail up the river to the city, dispose of their cargoes, and be off again with the quick despatch of regular liners to resume their depredations. But the buccaneers did not confine their attention to slave-ships, so that in a short time, despite the efforts of British, French, and American war-ships, the waters of the Gulf became as unsafe for all kinds of merchant-vessels as they were in the days of Morgan and Kidd.

As a base for their piratical and smuggling operations, as well as for supplies and repairs, the buccaneers chose Baratavia Bay, a place which met their requirements as though made to order. The name is applied to all of the Gulf coast of Louisiana between the mouth of the Mississippi and the mouth of another considerable stream known as the Bayou La Fourche, the latter a waterway to a rich and populous region. The Bay of Baratavia is screened from the Gulf, with which it is connected by a deep-water pass, by the island of Grande Terre, the trees on which were high enough to effectually hide the masts of the buccaneers' vessels from the view of inquisitive war-ships cruising outside. Between the Mississippi and the La Fourche there is a perfect network of small but navigable waterways which

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extend almost to New Orleans, so that the buccaneers thus had a back-stairs route, as it were, to the city, which brought their rendezvous at Grande Terre within safe and easy reach of the great mart of the Mississippi valley.

Such supplies as the buccaneers did not get from the ships they captured, they obtained by purchase in New Orleans. For the chains which were used in making up the caufles of slaves for transportation into the interior, they were accustomed to patronize the blacksmith-shop of the Brothers Lafitte, which stood—and still stands—on the northeast corner of Bourbon and St. Philippe Streets. Of the history of these brothers prior to their arrival in New Orleans nothing is definitely known. From their names, and because they spoke with the accent peculiar to the Garonne, they are credited with having been natives of the south of France, though whence they came and where they went are questions which have never been satisfactorily answered. They were quite evidently men of means, and might have been described as gentlemen blacksmiths, for they owned the slaves who pounded the iron. Being men of exceptional business shrewdness, it is not to be wondered at that from doing the buccaneers' blacksmithing they grad-

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ually became their agents and bankers, the smithy in St. Philippe Street coming in time to be a sort of clearing-house for many questionable transactions. Now Jean Lafitte was an extremely able man, combining a remarkable executive ability with a genius for organization, and had he lived a century later these traits, together with his predatory instincts and his utter contempt for the law, would undoubtedly have made him the president of a trust. Through success in managing their affairs, he gradually increased his usefulness to the buccaneers until he obtained complete control over them, and ruled them as despotically as a tribal chieftain. This was when his genius for organization had succeeded in uniting their different, and often rival, efforts and interests into a sort of pirates' corporation, composed of all the buccaneers, privateers, and freebooters doing business in the Gulf, this combination of outlaws, incredible as it may seem, as effectually controlling the price of slaves and many other things in the Mississippi valley as the Standard Oil Company controls the price of petroleum to-day.

The influence of this new element in the buccaneer business soon made itself felt. At that time New Orleans was a sort of cross between an American frontier town and a West Indian port,

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its streets and barrooms being filled with swaggering adventurers, gamblers, and soldiers of fortune from every corner of the three Americas, the presence of most of whom was due to the activity of the sheriffs in their former homes. It was from these men, cool, reckless, resourceful, that Lafitte recruited his forces. Leaving his brother Pierre in charge of the New Orleans branch of the enterprise, Jean Lafitte took up his residence on Grande Terre, where, under his directions, a fort was built, around which there soon sprang up a veritable city of thatched huts for the shelter of the buccaneers, and for the accommodation of the merchants who came to supply their wants or to purchase their captured cargoes. Within a year upward of a dozen armed vessels rendezvoused in Baratavia Bay, and their crews addressed Jean Lafitte as "*bosse*." One of the Baratarians, a buccaneer of the walk-the-plank-and-scuttle-the-ship school named Grambo, who boldly called himself a pirate, and jeered at Lafitte's polite euphemism of privateer, was one day unwise enough to dispute the new authority. Without an instant's hesitation Lafitte drew a pistol and shot him through the heart in the presence of the whole band. After that episode there was no more insubordination.

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By 1813 the Baratarians, who had long since extended their operations to include all kinds of merchandise, were driving such a roaring trade that the commerce and shipping of New Orleans was seriously diminished (for why go to New Orleans for their supplies, the sea-captains and the plantation-owners argued, when they could get what they wanted at Barataria for a fraction of the price), the business of the banks decreased alarmingly under the continual lessening of their deposits, while even the National Government began to feel its loss of revenue. The waters of Barataria, on the contrary, were alive with the sails of incoming and outgoing vessels; the wharfs which had been constructed at Grande Terre resounded to the creak of winches and the shouts of stevedores unloading contraband cargoes, and the long, low warehouses were filled with merchandise and the log stockades with slaves waiting to be sold and transported to the up-country plantations. So defiant of the law did Lafitte become that the streets of New Orleans were placarded with handbills announcing the auction sales at Barataria of captured cargoes, and to them flocked bargain-hunters from all that part of the South. An idea of the business done by the buccaneers at this time may be gained from an official statement

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that four hundred slaves were sold by auction in the Grande Terre market in a single day.

Of course the authorities took action in the matter, but their efforts to enforce the law proved both dangerous and ineffective. In October, 1811, a customs-inspector succeeded in surprising a band of Baratarians and seizing some merchandise they had with them, but before he could convey the prisoners and the captured contraband to New Orleans Lafitte and a party of his men overtook him, rescued the prisoners, recovered the property, and in the fight which ensued wounded several of the posse. Some months later Lafitte killed an inspector named Stout, who attempted to interfere with him, and wounded two of his deputies. Then Governor Claiborne issued a proclamation offering a reward for the capture of Lafitte dead or alive, at the same time appealing to the legislature for permission to raise an armed force to break up the buccaneering business for good and all. The cautious legislators declined to take any action, however, because they were unwilling to interfere with an enterprise that, however illegal it might be, was unquestionably developing the resources of lower Louisiana, and incidentally adding immensely to the fortunes of their constituents. As for the Baratarians, they paid as scant

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attention to the governor's proclamation as though it had never been written. Surrounded by groups of admiring friends, Lafitte and his lieutenants continued to swagger through the streets of New Orleans; his men openly boasted of their exploits in every barroom of the city, and in places of public resort announcements of auctions at Barataria continued to be displayed.

Then Governor Claiborne played his last card, and secured indictments of the Lafittes on the charge of piracy. Pierre Lafitte was arrested in his blacksmith-shop and confined without bail in the calaboose. Jean Lafitte promptly trumped the governor's card by retaining the services of Edward Livingston and John R. Grymes, the two most distinguished members of the Louisiana bar, at the enormous fee of twenty thousand dollars apiece. Grymes was then the district attorney, but he resigned his office for the fee. When his successor accused him in open court of having bartered his honor for pirate gold Grymes challenged him to a duel, and crippled him for life with a pistol bullet through the hip. When the two eminent lawyers had cleared their poor, innocent, persecuted clients of the unfounded and outrageous charges brought against them, and had taught them certain legal tricks whereby they



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could continue doing business at the old stand and still keep on the right side of the bars, Pierre Lafitte sent them an invitation to visit Baratavia and collect their fees in person. Livingston, a cautious gentleman who had no desire to risk himself among the pirates whose virtues he had just extolled so highly to a jury, declined the invitation with thanks, offering his colleague a commission of ten per cent to collect his fee for him. Grymes, who was a hard-drinking, high-living Virginian, and afraid of nothing on two feet or four, accepted the invitation with alacrity, and until the end of his life was wont to convulse his friends with lurid descriptions of the magnificent entertainment which Lafitte provided for him. After a carouse which lasted for a week, and which, from Grymes's accounts, was a combination of the feasts of Lucullus with the orgies of Nero, Lafitte sent his legal adviser back to New Orleans in a sailing vessel, together with several huge chests containing his fee in Spanish gold pieces. It is an interesting commentary on the customs which prevailed in those days that by the time Grymes reached New Orleans, after having visited the various plantations along the lower Mississippi and tried his luck at their card-tables, not a dollar of his fee remained.

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Now, it should be understood that the feebleness which characterized all the attempts of the Federal Government to break the power of the buccaneers was not due to any reluctance to prosecute them, but to the fact that it already had its attention taken up with far more pressing matters, for we were then in the midst of our second war with Great Britain. The long series of injuries which England had inflicted on the United States, such as the plundering and confiscation of our ships, the impressment into the British Navy of our seamen, and the interruption of our commerce with other nations, had culminated on June 18, 1812, by Congress declaring war. So unexpected was this action that it found the country totally unprepared. Our military establishment was barely large enough to provide garrisons for the most exposed points on our far-flung borders; the numerous ports on our seaboard were left unprotected and unfortified; and our navy consisted of but a handful of war-ships. The history of the first two years of the struggle, which was marked by brilliant American victories at sea, but by a disastrous attempt to invade Canada, has no place in this narrative. Early in the summer of 1814, however, the British Government, exasperated by its failure to inflict any

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vital damage in the northern States, determined to bring the war to a quick conclusion by the invasion and conquest of Louisiana. The preparations made for this expedition were in themselves startling. Indeed, few Americans have even a faint conception of the strength of the blow which England prepared to deal us, for with Napoleon's abdication and exile to Elba, and the ending of the war with France, she was enabled to bring her whole military and naval power against us. The British armada consisted of fifty war-ships, mounting more than a thousand guns. It was commanded by Vice-Admiral Sir Alexander Cochrane, under whom was Sir Thomas Hardy, the friend of Nelson, Rear-Admiral Malcolm, and Rear-Admiral Codrington, and was manned by the same sailors who had fought so valorously at the Nile and at Trafalgar. This great fleet acted as convoy for an almost equal number of transports, having on board eight thousand soldiers, which were the very flower of the British Army, nearly all of them being veterans of the Napoleonic campaigns. Such importance did the British Government attach to the success of this expedition that it seriously considered giving the command of it to no less a personage than the Duke of Wellington. So certain were the British that the ven-

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ture would be successful that they brought with them a complete set of civil officials to conduct the government of this new country which was about to be annexed to his Majesty's dominions, judges, customs-inspectors, revenue-collectors, court-criers, printers, and clerks, together with printing-presses and office paraphernalia, being embarked on board the transports. A large number of ladies, wives and relatives of the officers, also accompanied the expedition, to take part in the festivities which were planned to celebrate the capture of New Orleans. And, as though to cap this exhibition of audacity, a number of ships were chartered by British speculators to bring home the booty, the value of which was estimated beforehand at fourteen millions of dollars. Whether the British Government expected to be able to permanently hold Louisiana is extremely doubtful, for it must have been fully aware that the Western States were capable of pouring down a hundred thousand men, if necessary, to repel an invasion. It is probable, therefore, that they counted only on a temporary occupation, which they expected to prolong sufficiently, however, to give them time to pillage and lay waste the country, a course which they felt confident would quickly bring the government at Washington to terms.

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This formidable armada set sail from England early in the summer of 1814 and, reaching the Gulf of Mexico, established its base of operations, regardless of all the laws of neutrality, at the Spanish port of Pensacola. One morning in the following September a British brig hove to off Grande Terre, and called attention to her presence by firing a cannon. Lafitte, darting through the pass in his four-oared barge to reconnoitre, met the ship's gig with three scarlet-coated officers in the stern, who introduced themselves as bearers of important despatches for Mr. Lafitte. The pirate chief, introducing himself in turn, invited his unexpected guests ashore, and led the way to his quarters with that extraordinary charm of manner for which he was noted even among the punctilious Creoles of New Orleans. After a dinner of Southern delicacies, which elicited exclamations even from the blasé British officers, Lafitte opened the despatches. They were addressed to Jean Lafitte, Esquire, commandant at Baratavia, from the commander-in-chief of the British forces at Pensacola, and bluntly offered him thirty thousand dollars, payable in Pensacola or New Orleans, a commission as captain in the British Navy, and the enlistment of his men in the naval or military forces of Great Britain if

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he would assist the British in their impending invasion of Louisiana. Though it was a generous offer, no one knew better than the British commander that Lafitte's co-operation was well worth the price, for, familiar with the network of streams and navigable swamps lying between Barataria Bay and New Orleans, he was capable of guiding a British expedition through these secret waterways to the very gates of the city before the Americans would have a hint of its approach. It is not too much to assert that at this juncture the future of New Orleans, and indeed of the whole Mississippi Valley, hung upon the decision of Jean Lafitte, a pirate and a fugitive from justice with a price upon his head.

Whether Lafitte seriously considered accepting the offer there is, of course, no way of knowing. That it must have sorely tempted him it seems but reasonable to suppose, for he was not an American, either by birth or naturalization, and the prospect of exchanging his hazardous outlaw's life, with a vision of the gallows ever looming before him for a captain's commission in the royal navy, with all that that implied, could hardly have failed to appeal to him strongly. That he promptly decided to reject the offer speaks volumes for the man's strength of character and for

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his faith in American institutions. Appreciating that at such a crisis every hour gained was of value to the Americans, he asked time to consider the proposal, requesting the British officers to await him while he consulted an old friend and associate whose vessel, he said, was then lying in the bay. Scarcely was he out of sight, however, before a band of buccaneers, acting, of course, under his orders, seized the officers and hustled them into the interior of the island, where they were politely but forcibly detained. Here they were found some days later by Lafitte, who pretended to be highly indignant at such unwarrantable treatment of his guests. Releasing them with profuse apologies, he saw them safely aboard their brig, and assured them that he would shortly communicate his decision to the British commander. But that officer's letter was already in the hands of a friend of Lafitte's in New Orleans, who was a member of the legislature, and accompanying it was a communication from the pirate chief himself, couched in those altruistic and patriotic phrases for which the rascal was famous. In it he asserted that, though he admitted being guilty of having evaded the payment of certain customs duties, he had never lost his loyalty and affection for the United States, and that, notwithstanding

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the fact that there was a price on his head, he would never miss an opportunity of serving his adopted country. A few days later Lafitte forwarded through the same channels much valuable information which his agents had gathered as to the strength, resources, and plans of the British expedition, enclosing with it a letter addressed to Governor Claiborne in which he offered the services of himself and his men in defence of the State and city on condition that they were granted a pardon for past offences.

Receiving no reply to this communication, Lafitte sailed up the river to New Orleans in his lugger and made his way to the residence of the governor. Governor Claiborne was seated at his desk, immersed in the business of his office, when the door was softly opened, and Lafitte, stepping inside, closed it behind him. Clad in the full-skirted, bottle-green coat, the skin-tight breeches of white leather, and the polished Hessian boots which he affected, he presented a most graceful and gallant figure. As he entered he drew two pistols from his pockets, cocked them, and covered the startled governor, after which ominous preliminaries he bowed with the grace for which he was noted.

“Sir,” he remarked pleasantly, “you may pos-



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sibly have heard of me. My name is Jean Lafitte."

"What the devil do you mean, sir," exploded the governor, "by showing yourself here? Don't you know that I shall call the sentry and have you arrested?"

"Pardon me, your Excellency," interrupted Lafitte, moving his weapons significantly, "but you will do nothing of the sort. If you move your hand any nearer that bell I shall be compelled to shoot you through the shoulder, a necessity, believe me, which I should deeply regret. I have called on you because I have something important to say to you, and I intend that you shall hear it. To begin with, you have seen fit to put a price upon my head?"

"Upon the head of a pirate, yes," thundered the governor, now almost apoplectic with rage.

"In spite of that fact," continued Lafitte, "I have rejected a most flattering offer from the British government, and have come here, at some small peril to myself, to renew in person the offer of my services in repelling the coming invasion. I have at my command a body of brave, well-armed, and highly disciplined men who have been trained to fight. Does the State care to accept their services or does it not?"

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The governor, folding his arms, looked long at Lafitte before he answered. Then he held out his hand. "It is a generous offer that you make, sir. I accept it with pleasure."

"At daybreak to-morrow, then," said Lafitte, replacing his pistols, "my men will be awaiting your Excellency's orders across the river." Then, with another sweeping bow, he left the room as silently as he had entered it.

Governor Claiborne immediately communicated Lafitte's offer to General Andrew Jackson, then at Mobile, who had been designated by the War Department to conduct the defence of Louisiana. Jackson, who had already issued a proclamation denouncing the British for their overtures to "robbers, pirates, and hellish bandits," as he termed the Baratarians, promptly replied that the only thing he would have to do with Lafitte was to hang him. Nevertheless, when the general arrived in New Orleans a few days later, Lafitte called at his headquarters and requested an interview. By this time Jackson was conscious of the feebleness of the resources at his disposal for the defence of the city and of the strength of the armament directed against it, which accounts, perhaps, for his consenting to receive the "hellish bandit." Lafitte, looking the grim old soldier squarely in

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the eye, repeated his offer, and so impressed was Jackson with the pirate's cool and fearless bearing that he accepted his services.

On the 10th of December, 1814, ten days after Jackson's arrival in New Orleans, the British armada reached the mouth of the Mississippi. Small wonder that the news almost created a panic in the city, for the very names of the ships and regiments composing the expedition had become famous through their exploits in the Napoleonic wars. It was a nondescript and motley force which Jackson had hastily gathered to repel this imposing army of invasion. Every man capable of bearing arms in New Orleans and its vicinity—planters, merchants, bankers, lawyers—had volunteered for service. To the local company of colored freedmen was added another one composed of colored refugees from Santo Domingo, men who had sided with the whites in the revolution there and had had to leave the island in consequence. Even the prisoners in the calaboose had been released and provided with arms. From the parishes round about came Creole volunteers by the hundred, clad in all manner of clothing and bearing all kinds of weapons. From Mississippi came a troop of cavalry under Hinds, which was followed a few hours later by

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Coffee's famous brigade of "Dirty Shirts," composed of frontiersmen from the forests of Kentucky and Tennessee, who after a journey of eight hundred miles through the wilderness answered Jackson's message to hurry by covering the one hundred and fifty miles between Baton Rouge and New Orleans in two days. Added to these were a thousand raw militiamen, who had been brought down on barges and flat-boats from the towns along the upper river, four companies of regulars, Beale's brigade of riflemen, a hundred Choctaw Indians in war-paint and feathers, and last, but in many respects the most efficient of all, the corps of buccaneers from Barataria, under the command of the Lafittes. The men, dragging with them cannon taken from their vessels, were divided into two companies, one under Captain Beluche (who rose in after years to be admiral-in-chief of Venezuela) and the other under a veteran privateersman named Dominique You. These men were fighters by profession, hardy, seasoned, and cool-headed, and as they swung through the streets of New Orleans to take up the position which Jackson had assigned them, even that taciturn old soldier gave a grunt of approbation.

Jackson had chosen as his line of defence an

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artificial waterway known as the Rodriguez Canal, which lay some five miles to the east of the city, and along its embankments, which in themselves formed pretty good fortifications, he distributed his men. On the night of December 23 a force of two thousand British succeeded, by means of boats, in making their way, through the chain of bayous which surrounds the city, to within a mile or two of Jackson's lines, where they camped for the night. Being informed of their approach (for the British, remember, had the whole countryside against them), Jackson, knowing the demoralizing effect of a night attack, directed Coffee and his Tennesseans to throw themselves upon the British right, while at the same moment Beale's Kentuckians attacked on the left. Trained in all the wiles of Indian warfare, the frontiersmen succeeded in reaching the outskirts of the British camp before they were challenged by the sentries. Their reply was a volley at close quarters and a charge with the tomahawk—for they had no bayonets—which drove the British force back in something closely akin to a rout.

Meanwhile Jackson had set his other troops at work strengthening their line of fortifications, so that when the sun rose on the morning of the day

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before Christmas it found them strongly intrenched behind earthworks, helped out with timber, sand-bags, fence-rails, and cotton-bales—whence arose the myth that the Americans fought behind bales of cotton. The British troops were far from being in Christmas spirits, for the truth had already begun to dawn upon them that men can fight as well in buckskin shirts as in scarlet tunics, and that these raw-boned wilderness hunters, with their powder-horns and abnormally long rifles, were likely to prove more formidable enemies than the imposing grenadiers of Napoleon's Old Guard, whom they had been fighting in Spain and France. On that same day before Christmas, strangely enough, a treaty of peace was being signed by the envoys of the two nations in a little Belgian town, four thousand miles away.

On Christmas Day, however, the wonted confidence of the British soldiery was somewhat restored by the arrival of Sir Edward Pakenham, the new commander-in-chief, for even in that hard-fighting day there were few European soldiers who bore more brilliant reputations. A brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington, he had fought side by side with him through the Peninsular War; he had headed the storming party at Badajoz; and at Salamanca had led the charge which won

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the day for England and a knighthood for himself. An earldom and the governorship of Louisiana, it was said, had been promised him as his reward for the American expedition.

Pakenham's practised eye quickly appreciated the strength of the American position, which, after a council of war, it was decided to carry by storm. During the night of the 26th the storming columns, eight thousand strong, took up their positions within half a mile of the American lines. As the sun rose next morning over fields sparkling with frost, the bugles sounded the advance, and the British army, ablaze with color, and in as perfect alignment as though on parade, moved forward to the attack. As they came within range of the American guns, a group of plantation buildings which masked Jackson's front were blown up, and the British were startled to find themselves confronted by a row of ship's cannon, manned as guns are seldom manned on land. Around each gun was clustered a crew of lean, fierce-faced, red-shirted ruffians, caked with sweat and mud: they were Lafitte's buccaneers, who had responded to Jackson's orders by running in all the way from their station on the Bayou St. John that morning. Not until he could make out the brass buttons on the tunics of the advan-

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cing British did Lafitte give the command to fire. Then the great guns of the pirate-patriots flashed and thundered. Before that deadly fire the scarlet columns crumbled as plaster crumbles beneath a hammer, the men dropping, first by twos and threes, then by dozens and scores. In five minutes the attacking columns, composed of regiments which were the boast of the British army, had been compelled to sullenly retreat.

The British commander, appreciating that the repulse of his forces was largely due to the fire of the Baratarian artillery, gave orders that guns be brought from the fleet and mounted in a position where they could silence the fire of the buccaneers. Three days were consumed in the herculean task of moving the heavy pieces of ordnance into position, but when the sun rose on New Year's morning it showed a skilfully constructed line of intrenchments, running parallel to the American front and armed with thirty heavy guns. While the British were thus occupied, the Americans had not been idle, for Jackson had likewise busied himself in constructing additional batteries, while Commodore Patterson, the American naval commander, had gone through the sailors' boarding-houses of New Orleans with a fine-tooth comb, impressing every nautical-looking character on which



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he could lay his hands, regardless of nationality, color, or excuses, to serve the guns. With their storming columns sheltered behind the breastworks, awaiting the moment when they would burst through the breach which they confidently expected would shortly be made in the American defences, the British batteries opened fire with a crash which seemed to split the heavens. Throughout the artillery duel which ensued splendid service was rendered by the men under Lafitte, who trained their guns as carefully and served them as coolly as though they were back again on the decks of their privateers. The storming parties, which were waiting for a breach to be made, waited in vain, for within an hour and thirty minutes after the action opened the British batteries were silenced, their guns dismantled, and their parapets levelled with the plain. The veterans of Wellington and Nelson had been outfought from first to last by a band of buccaneers, reinforced by a few-score American bluejackets and a handful of nondescript seamen.

Pakenham had one more plan for the capture of the city. This was a general assault by his entire army on the American lines. His plan of attack was simple, and would very probably have proved successful against troops less accustomed

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to frontier warfare than the Americans. Colonel Thornton, with fourteen hundred men, was directed to cross the river during the night of January 7, and, creeping up to the American lines under cover of the darkness, to carry them by assault. His attack was to be the signal for a column under General Gibbs to storm Jackson's right, and for another, under General Keane, to throw itself against the American left, General Lambert, who had just arrived with two fresh regiments, being held in reserve. So carefully had the British commanders perfected their plans that the battle was already won—in theory.

No one knew better than Jackson that this was to be the deciding round of the contest, and he accordingly made his preparations to win it with a solar-plexus blow. He also had received a reinforcement, for the long-expected militia from Kentucky, two thousand two hundred strong, had just arrived, after a forced march of fifteen hundred miles, though in a half-naked and starving condition. Our history contains nothing finer, to my way of thinking, than the story of how these mountaineers of the Blue Ridge, foot-sore, ragged, and hungry, came pouring down from the north to repel the threatened invasion. The Americans, who numbered, all told, barely four thousand men,

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were scattered along a front of nearly three miles, one end of the line extending so far into a swamp that the soldiers stood in water to their waists during the day, and at night slept on floating logs made fast to trees.

Long before daybreak on the morning of the 8th of January the divisions of Gibbs and Keane were in position, and waiting impatiently for the outburst of musketry which would be the signal that Thornton had begun his attack. Thornton had troubles of his own, however, for the swift current of the Mississippi, as though wishing to do its share in the nation's defence, had carried his boats a mile and a half down-stream, so that it was daylight before he was able to effect a landing, when a surprise was, of course, out of the question. But Pakenham, naturally obstinate and now made wholly reckless by the miscarriage of his plans, refused to recall his orders; so, as the gray mists of the early morning slowly lifted, his columns were seen advancing across the fields.

"Steady now, boys! Steady!" called Jackson, as he rode up and down behind his lines. "Don't waste your ammunition, for we've none to spare. Pick your man, wait until he gets within range, and then let him have it! Let's get this business over with to-day!" His orders were

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obeyed to the letter, for not a shot was fired until the scarlet columns were within certain range. Then the order "Commence firing" was repeated down the line. Neither hurriedly, nor excitedly, nor confusedly was it obeyed, but with the utmost calmness and deliberation, the frontiersmen, trained to use the rifle from boyhood, choosing their targets, and calculating their ranges as unconcernedly as though they were hunting in their native forests. Still the British columns pressed indomitably on, and still the lean and lantern-jawed Jackson rode up and down his lines, cheering, cautioning, exhorting, directing. Suddenly he reined up his horse at the Baratarian battery commanded by Dominique You.

"What's this? What's this?" he exclaimed. "You have stopped firing? What the devil does this mean, sir?"

"Of course we've stopped firing, general," said the buccaneer, touching his forelock man-o'-war fashion. "The powder's good for nothing. It might do to shoot blackbirds with, but not red-coats."

Jackson beckoned to one of his aides-de-camp.

"Tell the ordnance officer that I will have him shot in five minutes as a traitor if Dominique complains again of his powder," and he galloped



The battle of New Orleans.

From a painting by D. M. Carter.



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off. When he passed that way a few minutes later the rattle of the musketry was being punctuated at half-minute intervals with the crash of the Baratarian guns. "Ha, friend Dominique," called Jackson, "I'm glad to see you're at work again."

"Pretty good work, too, general," responded the buccaneer. "It looks to me as if the British have discovered that there has been a change of powder in this battery." He was right. Before the combined rifle and artillery fire of the Americans the British columns were melting like snow under a spring rain. Still their officers led them on, cheering, pleading, threatening, imploring. Pakenham's arm was pierced by a bullet; at the same instant another killed his horse, but, mounting the pony of his aide-de-camp, he continued to encourage his disheartened and wavering men. Keane was borne bleeding from the field, and a moment later Gibbs, mortally wounded, was carried after him. The panic which was just beginning to seize the British soldiery was completed at this critical instant by a shot from one of the Baratarians' big guns which burst squarely in the middle of the advancing column, causing terrible destruction in the solid ranks. Pakenham's horse fell dead, and the general reeled into the arms of an officer who sprang forward to catch him. Terri-

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bly wounded, he was carried to the shelter of a spreading oak, beneath which, five minutes later, he breathed his last. Then the ebb-tide began. The shattered regiments, demoralized by the death of their commander, and themselves fearfully depleted by the American fire, broke and ran. Ten minutes later, save for the crawling, agonized wounded, not a living foe was to be seen. But the field, which had been green with grass half an hour before, was carpeted with scarlet now, and the carpet was made of British dead. Of the six thousand men who took part in the attack, it is estimated that two thousand six hundred were killed or wounded. Of the Ninety-third Regiment, which had gone into action nine hundred strong, only one hundred and thirty-nine men answered to the roll-call. The Americans had eight men killed and thirteen wounded. The battle had lasted exactly twenty-five minutes. At eight o'clock the American bugles sounded "Cease firing," and Jackson—whom this victory was to make President of the United States—followed by his staff, rode slowly down the lines, stopping at each command to make a short address. As he passed, the regimental fifes and drums burst into "Hail, Columbia," and the rows of weary, powder-grimed men, putting their caps



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on the ends of their long rifles, swung them in the air and cheered madly the victor of New Orleans.

There is little more to tell. On March 17 the British expedition, accompanied by the judges and customs-inspectors and revenue-collectors, and by the officers' wives who had come out to take part in the festivities which were to mark the conquest, set sail from the mouth of the Mississippi, reaching Europe just in time to participate in the Waterloo campaign. In the general orders issued by Jackson after the battle the highest praise was given to the Lafittes and their followers from Barataria, while the official despatches to Washington strongly urged that some recognition be made of the extraordinary services rendered by the erstwhile pirates. A few weeks later the President granted a full pardon to the inhabitants of Barataria, his message concluding: "Offenders who have refused to become the associates of the enemy in war upon the most seducing terms of invitation, and who have aided to repel his hostile invasion of the territory of the United States, can no longer be considered as objects of punishment, but as objects of generous forgiveness." Taking advantage of this amnesty, the ex-pirates settled down to the peaceable lives of fishermen and market-gardeners, and their descendants dwell upon the

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shores of Baratavia Bay to this day. As to the future movements of the brothers Lafitte, beyond the fact that they established themselves for a time at Galveston, whence they harassed Spanish commerce in the Gulf of Mexico, nothing definite is known. Leaving New Orleans soon after the battle, they sailed out of the Mississippi, and out of this story.

**THE MAN WHO DARED TO CROSS  
THE RANGES**



## THE MAN WHO DARED TO CROSS THE RANGES

**A**BOUT the word frontiersman there is a pretty air of romance. The very mention of it conjures up a vision of lean, sinewy, brown-faced men, in fur caps and moccasins and fringed buckskin, slipping through virgin forests or pushing across sun-scorched prairies—advance-guards of civilization. Hardy, resolute, taciturn figures, they have passed silently across the pages of our history and we shall see their like no more. To them we owe a debt that we can never repay—nor, indeed, have we even publicly acknowledged it. We followed by the trails which they had blazed for us; we built our towns in those rich valleys and pastured our herds on those fertile hillsides which theirs were the first white men's eyes to see. The American frontiersman was never a self-seeker. His discoveries he left as a heritage to those who followed him. In almost every case he died poor and, more often than not, with his boots on. David Livingstone and Henry

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M. Stanley, the two Englishmen who did more than any other men for the opening up of Africa, lie in Westminster Abbey, and thousands of their countrymen each year stand reverently beside their tombs. To Cecil Rhodes, another Anglo-African pioneer, a great national memorial has been erected on the slopes of Table Mountain. Far, far greater parts in the conquest of a wilderness, the winning of a continent, were played by Daniel Boone, William Bowie, Kit Carson, Davy Crockett; yet how many of those who to-day enjoy the fruits of the perils they faced, the hardships they endured, know much more of them than as characters in dime novels, can tell where they are buried, can point to any statues or monuments which have been erected to their memories?

There are two million four hundred thousand people in the State of California, and most of them boast of it as "God's own country." They have more State pride than any people that I know, yet I would be willing to wager almost anything you please that you can pick a hundred native sons of California, and put to each of them the question, "Who was Jedediah Smith?" and not one of them would be able to answer it correctly. The public parks of San Francisco and Los Angeles and San Diego and Sacramento have in-

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numerable statues of one kind and another, but you will find none of this man with the stern old Puritan name; they are starting a hall of fame in California, but no one has proposed Jedediah Smith as deserving a place in it. Yet to him, perhaps more than to any other man, is due the fact that California is American: he was the greatest of the pathfinders; he was the real founder of the Overland Trail; he was the man who led the way across the ranges. Had it not been for the trail he blazed and the thousands who followed in his footsteps the Sierra Nevadas, instead of the Rio Grande, might still mark the line of our frontier.

The westward advance of population which took place during the first quarter of the nineteenth century far exceeded the limits of any of the great migrations of mankind upon the older continents. The story of the American onset to the beckoning West is one of the wonder-tales of history. Over the natural waterway of the great northern lakes, down the road to Pittsburg, along the trail which skirted the Potomac, and then down the Ohio, over the passes of the Cumberland into Tennessee, round the end of the Alleghanies into the Gulf States, up the Missouri, and so across the Rockies to the head waters of the Columbia, or southwestward from St. Louis to the Spanish settle-

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ments of Santa Fé, the hardy pioneers poured in an ever-increasing stream, carrying with them little but axe, spade, and rifle, some scanty household effects, a small store of provisions, a liberal supply of ammunition, and unlimited faith, courage, and enterprise.

During that brief period the people of the United States extended their occupation over the whole of that vast region lying between the Alleghanies and the Rockies—a territory larger than all of Europe, without Russia—annexed it from the wilderness, conquered, subdued, improved, cultivated, civilized it, and all without one jot of governmental assistance. Throughout these years, as the frontiersmen pressed into the West, they continued to fret and strain against the Spanish boundaries. The Spanish authorities, and after them the Mexican, soon became seriously alarmed at this silent but resistless American advance, and from the City of Mexico orders went out to the provincial governors that Americans venturing within their jurisdiction should be treated, whenever an excuse offered, with the utmost severity. But, notwithstanding the menace of Mexican prisons, of Indian tortures, of savage animals, of thirst and starvation in the wilderness, the pioneers pushed westward and ever westward, until at last



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their further progress was abruptly halted by the great range of the Sierra Nevada, snow-crested, and presumably impassable, which rose like a titanic wall before them, barring their further march.

It was at about the time of this halt in our westward progress that Captain Jedediah Smith came riding onto the scene. You must picture him as a gaunt-faced, lean-flanked, wiry man, with nerves of iron, sinews of rawhide, a skin like oak-tanned leather, and quick on his feet as a catamount. He was bearded to the ears, of course, for razors formed no part of the scanty equipment of the frontiersman, and above the beard shone a pair of very keen, bright eyes, with the concentrated wrinkles about their corners that come of staring across the prairies under a blazing sun. He was sparing of his words, as are most men who dwell in the great solitudes, and, like them, he was, in an unorthodox way, devout, his stern and rugged features as well as his uncompromising scriptural name betraying the grim old Puritan stock from which he sprang. His hair was long and black, and would have covered his shoulders had it not been tied at the back of the neck by a leather thong. His dress was that of the Indian adapted to meet the require-

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ments of the adventuring white man: a hunting-shirt and trousers of fringed buckskin, embroidered moccasins of elkhide, and a cap made from the glossy skin of a beaver, with the tail hanging down behind. On hot desert marches, and in camp, he took off the beaver-skin cap and twisted about his head a bright bandanna, which, when taken with his gaunt, unshaven face, made him look uncommonly like a pirate. These garments were by no means fresh and gaudy, like those affected by the near-frontiersmen who take part in the production of Wild West shows; instead they were very soiled and much worn and greasy, and gave evidence of having done twenty-four hours' duty a day for many months at a stretch. Hanging on his chest was a capacious powder-horn, and in his belt was a long, straight knife, very broad and heavy in the blade—a first cousin of that deadly weapon to which William Bowie was in after years to give his name; in addition he carried a rifle, with an altogether extraordinary length of barrel, which brought death to any living thing within a thousand yards on which its foresight rested. His mount was a plains-bred pony, as wiry and unkempt and enduring as himself. Everything considered, Smith could have been no gentle-looking figure, and I rather imagine that, if he were alive and ven-

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tured into a Western town to-day, he would probably be arrested by the local constable as an undesirable character. I have now sketched for you, in brief, bold outline, as good a likeness of Smith as I am able with the somewhat scanty materials at hand, for he lived and did his pioneering in the days when frontiersmen were as common as traffic policemen are now, added to which the men who were familiar with his exploits were of a sort more ready with their pistols than with their pens.

The dates of Smith's birth and death are not vital to this story, and perhaps it is just as well that they are not, for I can find no record of when he came into the world, and only the Indian warrior who wore his scalp-lock at his waist could have told the exact date on which he went out of it. It is enough to know that, just as the nineteenth century was passing the quarter mark, Smith was the head of a firm of fur-traders, Smith, Jackson & Soubllette, which had obtained from President John Quincy Adams permission to hunt and trade to their hearts' content in the region lying beyond the Rocky Mountains. It would have been much more to the point to have obtained the permission of the Mexican governor-general of the Californias, or of the great chief of the Comanches, for they held practically all of the territory in question

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between them. Those were the days whose like we shall never know again, when the streams were alive with beaver, when there were more elk and antelope on the prairies than there are cattle now, and when the noise made by the moving buffalo herds sounded like the roll of distant thunder. They were the days when a fortune, as fortunes were then reckoned, awaited the man with unlimited ammunition, a sure eye, and a body inured to hardships. What the founder of the Astor fortune was doing in the Puget Sound country, Smith and his companions purposed to do in the Rockies; and, with this end in view, established their base camp on the eastern shores of the Great Salt Lake, not far from where Ogden now stands. This little band of pioneers formed the westernmost outpost of American civilization, for between them and the nearest settlement, at the junction of the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, stretched thirteen hundred miles of savage wilderness. Livingstone, on his greatest journey, did not penetrate half as far into unknown Africa as Smith did into unknown America, and while the English explorer was at the head of a large and well-equipped expedition, the American was accompanied by a mere handful of men.

In August, 1826, Smith and a small party of his

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hunters found themselves in the terrible Painted Desert, that God-forsaken expanse of sand and lava where the present States of Arizona, Utah, and Nevada meet. Water there was none, for the streams had run dry, and the horses and pack-mules were dying of thirst and exhaustion; the game had entirely disappeared; the supplies were all but finished—and five hundred miles of the most inhospitable country in the world lay between them and their camp on Great Salt Lake. The situation was perilous, indeed, and a decision had to be made quickly if any of them were to get out alive.

“What few supplies we have left will be used up before we get a quarter way back to the camp,” said Smith. “Our only chance—and I might as well tell you it’s a mighty slim one, boys—is in pushing on to California.”

“But California’s a good four hundred miles away,” expostulated his companions, “and the Sierras lie between, and no one has ever crossed them.”

“Then I’ll be the first man to do it,” said Smith. “Besides, I’ve always had a hankering to learn what lies on the other side of those ranges. Now’s my chance to find out.”

“I reckon there ain’t much chance of our ever

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seeing Salt Lake or California either," grumbled one of the hunters, "and even if we do reach the coast the Mexicans 'll clap us into prison."

"Well, so fur's I'm concerned," said Smith decisively, "I'd rather be alive and in a Greaser prison than to be dead in the desert. I'm going to California or die on the way."

History chronicles few such marches. Westward pressed the little troop of pioneers, across the sun-baked lava beds of southwestern Utah, over the arid deserts and the barren ranges of southern Nevada, and so to the foot-hills of that great Sierran range which rears itself ten thousand feet skyward, forming a barrier which had theretofore separated the fertile lands of the Pacific slope from the rest of the continent more effectually than an ocean. The lava beds gave way to sand wastes dotted with clumps of sage-brush and cactus, and the cactus changed to stunted pines, and the pines ran out in rocks, and the rocks became covered with snow, and still Smith and his hunters struggled on, emaciated, tattered, almost barefooted, lamed by the cactus spines on the desert, and the stones on the mountain slopes, until at last they stood upon the very summit of the range and, like that other band of pioneers in an earlier age, looked down on the promised land after



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Westward pressed the little troop of pioneers, across the sun-baked lava beds of southwestern Utah.





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their wanderings in the wilderness. No explorer in the history of the world, not Columbus, nor Pizarro, nor Champlain, nor De Soto, ever gazed upon a land so fertile and so full of beauty. The mysterious, the jealously guarded, the storied land of California lay spread before them like a map in bas-relief. Then the descent of the western slope began, the transition from snow-clad mountain peaks to hillsides clothed with subtropical vegetation amazing the Americans by its suddenness. Imagine how like a dream come true it must have been to these men, whose lives had been spent in the less kindly climate and amid the comparatively scanty vegetation of the Middle West, to suddenly find themselves in this fairy-land of fruit and flowers!

“It is, indeed, a white man’s country,” said Smith prophetically, as, leaning on his long rifle, he gazed upon the wonderful panorama which unrolled itself before him. “Though it is Mexican just now, sooner or later it must and shall be ours.”

Heartened by the sight of this wonderful new country, and by the knowledge that they must be approaching some of the Mexican settlements, but with bodies sadly weakened from exposure, hunger, and exhaustion, the Americans slowly made their way down the slope, crossed those fer-

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tile lowlands which are now covered with groves of orange and lemon, and so, guided by some friendly Indians whom they met, came at last to the mission station of San Gabriel, one of that remarkable chain of outposts of the church founded by the indefatigable Franciscan, Father Junipero Serra. The little company of worn and weary men sighted the red-tiled roof of the mission just at sunset, and though Smith and his followers came from stern New England stock which prided itself on having no truck with Papists, I rather imagine that as the sweet, clear mission bells chimed out the angelus they lifted their hats and stood with bowed heads in silent thanksgiving for their preservation.

I doubt if there was a more astonished community between the oceans than was the monastic one of San Gabriel when this band of ragged strangers suddenly appeared from nowhere and asked for food and shelter.

“You come from the South—from Mexico?” queried the father superior, staring, half-awed, at these gaunt, fierce-faced, bearded men who spoke in a strange tongue.

“No, padre,” answered Smith, calling to his aid the broken Spanish he had picked up in his trading expeditions to Santa Fé, “we come from the East,

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from the country beyond the great mountains, from the United States. We are Americans," he added a little proudly.

"They say they come from the East," the brown-robed monks whispered to each other. "It is impossible. No one has ever come from that direction. Have not the Indians told us many times that there is no food, no water in that direction, and that, moreover, there is no way to cross the mountains? It is, indeed, a strange and incredible tale that these men tell. But we will offer them our hospitality in the name of the blessed St. Francis, for that we withhold from no man; but it is the part of wisdom to despatch a messenger to San Diego to acquaint the governor of their coming, for it may well be that they mean no good to the people of this land."

Had the good monks been able to look forward a few-score years, perhaps they would not have been so ready to offer Smith and his companions the shelter of the mission roof. But how were they to know that these ragged strangers, begging for food at their mission door, were the skirmishers for a mighty host which would one day pour over those mountain ranges to the eastward as the water pours over the falls at Niagara; that within rifle-shot of where their mission stood a city of

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half a million souls would spread itself across the hills; that down the dusty Camino Real, which the founder of their mission had trudged so often in his sandals and woollen robe, would whirl strange horseless, panting vehicles, putting a mile a minute behind their flying wheels; that twin lines of steel would bring their southernmost station at San Diego within twenty hours, instead of twenty days, of their northernmost outpost at Sonoma; and that over this new land would fly, not the red-white-and-green standard of Mexico, but an alien banner of stripes and stars?

The four years which intervened between the collapse of Spanish rule in Mexico and the arrival of Jedediah Smith at San Gabriel were marked by political chaos in the Californias. When a governor of Alta California rose in the morning he did not know whether he was the representative of an emperor, a king, a president, or a dictator. As a result of these perennial disorders, the Mexican officials ascribed sinister motives to the most innocent episodes. No sooner, therefore, did Governor Echeandia learn of the arrival in his province of a mysterious party of Americans than he ordered them brought under escort to San Diego for examination. Though those present probably did not appreciate it, the meeting of

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Smith and Echeandia in the palace at San Diego was a peculiarly significant one. There sat at his ease in his great chair of state the saturnine Mexican governor, arrogant and haughty, beruffled and gold-laced, his high-crowned sombrero and his velvet jacket heavy with bullion, while in front of him stood the American frontiersman, gaunt, unshaven, and ragged, but as cool and self-possessed as though he was at the head of a conquering army instead of a forlorn hope. The one was as truly the representative of a passing as the other was of a coming race. Small wonder that Echeandia, as he observed the hardy figures and determined faces of the Americans, thought to himself how small would be Mexico's chance of holding California if others of their countrymen began to follow in their footsteps. He and his officials cross-examined Smith as closely as though the frontiersman was a prisoner on trial for his life, as, in a sense, he was, for almost any fate might befall him and his companions in that remote corner of the continent without any one being called to account for it. Smith described the series of misfortunes which had led him to cross the ranges; he asserted that he desired nothing so much as to get back into American territory again, and he earnestly begged the governor to provide

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him with the necessary provisions and permit him to depart. His story was so frank and plausible that Echeandia, with characteristic Spanish suspicion, promptly disbelieved every word of it, for why, he argued, should any sane man make so hazardous a journey unless he were a spy and well paid to risk his life? For even in those early days, remember, the Mexicans had begun to fear the ambitions of the young republic to the eastward. So, despite their protests, he ordered the Americans to be imprisoned—and no one knew better than they did that, once within the walls of a Mexican prison, there was small chance of their seeing the outside world again. Fortunately for the explorers, however, it so happened that there were three American trading-schooners lying in San Diego harbor at the time, and their captains, determined to see the rights of their fellow countrymen respected, joined in a vigorous and energetic protest to the governor against this high-handed and unjustified action. This seems to have frightened Echeandia, for he reluctantly gave orders for the release of Smith and his companions, but ordered them to leave the country at once, and by the same route by which they had come.

When the year 1827 was but a few days old, therefore, the Americans turned their faces north-

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ward, but instead of retracing their steps in accordance with Echeandia's orders, they crossed the coast range, probably through the Tejon Pass, and kept on through the fertile region now known as the San Joaquin Valley, in the hope that by crossing the Sierra farther to the northward they would escape the terrible rigors of the Colorado desert. When some three hundred miles north of San Gabriel they attempted to recross the ranges, but a feat that had been hazardous in midsummer was impossible in midwinter, and the entire expedition nearly perished in the attempt. Several of the men and all the horses died of cold and hunger, and it was only by incredible exertions that Smith and his few remaining companions, terribly frozen and totally exhausted, managed to reach the Santa Clara Valley and Mission San José. So slow was their progress that the news of their approach preceded them and caused considerable disquietude to the monks. Learning from the Indians that he and his tatterdemalion followers were objects of suspicion, Smith sent a letter to the father superior, in which he gave an account of his arrival at San Gabriel, of his interview with the governor, of his disaster in the Sierras, and of his present pitiable condition. "I am a long way from home," this pathetic missive concludes,

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“and am anxious to get there as soon as the nature of the case will permit. Our situation is quite unpleasant, being destitute of clothing and most of the necessaries of life, wild meat being our principal subsistence. I am, reverend father, your strange but real friend and Christian brother, Jedediah Smith.” As a result of this appeal, the hospitality of the mission was somewhat grudgingly extended to the Americans, who were by this time in the most desperate condition.

Hardships that would kill ordinary men were but unpleasant incidents in the lives of the pioneers, however, and in a few weeks they were as fit as ever to resume their journey. But, upon thinking the matter over, Smith decided that he would never be content if he went back without having found out what lay still farther to the northward, for in him was the insatiable curiosity and the indomitable spirit of the born explorer. But as his force, as well as his resources, had become sadly depleted, he felt it imperative that he should first return to Salt Lake and bring on the men, horses, and provisions he had left there. Accordingly, leaving most of his party in camp at San José, he set out with only two companions, recrossed the Sierra at one of its highest points (the place he crossed is where the railway comes through to-day)



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and after several uncomfortably narrow escapes from landslides and from Indians, eventually reached the camp on Great Salt Lake, where he found that his people had long since given him and his companions up for dead.

Breaking camp on a July morning, in 1827, Smith, with eighteen men and two women, turned his face once more toward California. To avoid the snows of the high Sierras, he chose the route he had taken on his first journey, reaching the desert country to the north of the Colorado River in early August. It was not until the party had penetrated too far into the desert to retreat that they found that the whole country was burnt up. For several days they pushed on in the hope of finding water. Across the yellow sand wastes they would sight the sparkle of a crystal lake, and would hasten toward it as fast as their jaded animals could carry them, only to find that it was a mirage. Then the horrors preliminary to death by thirst began: the animals, their blackened tongues protruding from their mouths, staggered and fell, and rose no more; the women grew delirious and babbled incoherent nothings; even the hardiest of the men stumbled as they marched, or tried to frighten away by shouts and gestures the fantastic shapes which danced before them. At

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last there came a morning when they could go no farther. Such of them as still retained their faculties felt that it was the end—that is, all but Jedediah Smith. He was of the breed which does not know the meaning of defeat, because they are never defeated until they are dead. Loading himself with the empty water-bottles, he set out alone into the desert, determined to follow one of the numerous buffalo trails, for he knew that sooner or later it must lead him to water of some sort, even if to nothing more than a buffalo-wallow. Racked with the fever of thirst, his legs shaking from exhaustion, he plodded on, under the pitiless sun, mile after mile, hour after hour, until, struggling to the summit of a low divide, he saw the channel of a stream in the valley beneath him. The expedition was saved. Stumbling and sliding down the slope in his haste to quench his intolerable thirst, he came to a sudden halt on the river-bank. It was nothing but an empty watercourse into which he was staring—the river had run dry! The shock of such a disappointment would have driven most men stark, staring mad. Only for a moment, however, was the veteran frontiersman staggered; he knew the character of many streams in the West—that often their waters run underground a

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few feet below the surface, and in a moment he was on his knees digging frantically in the soft sand. Soon the sand began to grow moist, and then the coveted water slowly began to filter upward into the little excavation he had hollowed. Throwing himself flat on the ground, he buried his burning face in the muddy water—and as he did so a shower of arrows whistled about him. A war-party of Comanches, unobserved, had followed and surrounded him. He had but exchanged the danger of death by thirst for the far more dreadful fate of death by torture. Though struck by several of the arrows, he held the Indians off until he had filled his water-bottles; then, retreating slowly, taking advantage of every particle of cover, as only a veteran plainsman can, blazing away with his unerring rifle whenever an Indian was incautious enough to show a portion of his figure, Smith succeeded in getting back to his companions with the precious water. With their dead animals for breastworks, the pioneers succeeded in holding the Indians at bay for six-and-thirty hours, but on the second night the redskins, heavily reinforced, rushed them in the night, ten of the men and the two women being killed in the hand-to-hand fight which ensued, and the few horses which remained alive being

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stampeded. I rather imagine that the women were shot by their own husbands, for the women of the frontier always preferred death to capture by these fiends in paint and feathers.

How Smith, calling all his craft and experience as a plainsman to his assistance, managed to lead his eight surviving companions through the encircling Indians by night, and how, wounded, horseless, and provisionless as they were, he succeeded in guiding them across the ranges to San Bernardino, is but another example of this forgotten hero's courage and resource. Having lost everything that he possessed, for the whole of his scanty savings had been invested in the ill-fated expedition, Smith, with such of his men as were strong enough to accompany him, set out to rejoin the party he had left some months previously at Mission San José. Scarcely had he set foot within that settlement, however, before he was arrested and taken under escort to Monterey, where he was taken before the governor, who, he found to his surprise and dismay, was no other than his old enemy of San Diego, Don José Echeandia. This time nothing would convince Echeandia that Smith was not the leader of an expedition which had territorial designs on California, and he promptly ordered him to be taken to prison and kept in

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solitary confinement as a dangerous conspirator. Thereupon Smith resorted to the same expedient he had used so successfully, and begged the captains of the American vessels in the harbor of Monterey for protection. So forcible were their representations that Echeandia finally agreed to release Smith on his swearing to leave California for good and all. To this proposal Smith willingly agreed and took the oath required of him, but, upon being released from prison, was astounded to learn that the governor had given orders that he must set out alone—that his hunters would not be permitted to accompany him. His and their protestations were disregarded. Smith must start at once and unaccompanied. He was given a horse and saddle, provisions, blankets, a rifle—and nothing more. It was a sentence of death which Echeandia had had pronounced on this American frontiersman, and both he and Smith knew it. Without having committed any crime—unless it was a crime to be an American—Jedediah Smith was driven out of the territory of a supposedly friendly nation, and told that he was at perfect liberty to make his way across two thousand miles of wilderness to the nearest American outpost—if he could.

Striking back into that range of the Sierras

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which lies southeast of Fresno, Smith succeeded in crossing them for a fourth time, evidently intending to make his way back to his old stamping-ground on the Great Salt Lake. Our knowledge of what occurred after he had crossed the ranges for the last time is confined to tales told to the settlers in later years by the Indians. While emerging from the terrible Death Valley, where hundreds of emigrants were to lose their lives during the rush to the gold-fields a quarter of a century later, he was attacked at a water-hole by a band of Indians. For many years afterward the Comanches were wont to tell with admiration how this lone pale-face, coming from out of the setting sun, had knelt behind his dead horse and held them off with his deadly rifle all through one scorching summer's day. But when nightfall came they crept up very silently under cover of the darkness and rushed him. His scalp was very highly valued, for it had cost the lives of twelve Comanche braves.

But Jedediah Smith did not die in vain. Tales of the rich and virgin country which he had found beyond the ranges flew as though with wings across the land; soon other pioneers made their way over the mountains by the trails which he had blazed; long wagon-trains crawled westward

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by the routes which he had taken; strange bands of horsemen pitched their tents in the valleys where he had camped. The mission bells grew silent; the monk in his woollen robe and the *caballero* in his gold-laced jacket passed away; settlements of hardy, energetic, nasal-voiced folk from beyond the Sierras sprang up everywhere. Then one day a new flag floated over the presidio in Monterey—a flag that was not to be pulled down. The American republic had reached the western ocean, and thus was fulfilled the dream of Jedediah Smith, the man who showed the way.





THE FLAG OF THE BEAR



## THE FLAG OF THE BEAR

**B**ECAUSE the battles which marked its establishment were really only skirmishes, in which but an insignificant number of lives were lost, and because it boasted less than a thousand citizens all told, certain of our historians have been so undiscerning as to assert that the Bear Flag Republic was nothing but a travesty and a farce. Therein they are wrong. Though it is doubtless true that the handful of frontiersmen who raised their home-made flag, with its emblem of a grizzly bear, over the Californian presidio of Sonoma on that July morning in 1846 took themselves much more seriously than the circumstances warranted, it is equally true that their action averted the seizure of California by England, and by forcing the hand of the administration at Washington was primarily responsible for adding what is now California, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, and more than half of Wyoming and Colorado to the Union. The series of intrigues and affrays and insurrections which re-

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sulted in the Pacific coast becoming American instead of European form a picturesque, exciting, and virtually unwritten chapter in our national history, a chapter in which furtive secret agents and haughty *caballeros*, pioneers in fringed buckskin, and naval officers in gold-laced uniforms all played their greater or their lesser parts.

To fully understand the conditions which led up to the "Bear Flag War," as it has been called, it is necessary to go back for a moment to the first quarter of the last century, when the territory of the United States ended at the Rocky Mountains and the red-white-and-green flag of Mexico floated over the whole of that vast, rich region which lay beyond. Under the Mexican régime the territory lying west of the Sierra Nevadas was divided into the provinces of Alta (or Upper) and Baja (or Lower) California, the population of the two provinces about 1845 totalling not more than fifteen thousand souls, nine-tenths of whom were Mexicans, Spaniards, and Indians, the rest American and European settlers. The foreigners, among whom Americans greatly predominated, soon became influential out of all proportion to their numbers. This was particularly true of the Americans, who, solidified by common interests, common dangers, and common ambitions, ob-

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tained large grants of land, built houses which in certain cases were little short of forts, frequently married into the most aristocratic of the Californian families, and before long practically controlled the commerce of the entire territory.

It was only to be expected, therefore, that the Mexicans should become more and more apprehensive of American ambitions. Nor did President Jackson's offer, in 1835, to buy Southern California—an offer which was promptly refused—serve to do other than strengthen these apprehensions. And to make matters worse, if such a thing were possible, Commodore T. ApCatesby Jones, having heard a rumor that war had broken out between the United States and Mexico, and having reason to believe that a British force was preparing to seize California, landed a force of bluejackets and marines, and on October 21, 1842, raised the American flag over the presidio at Monterey. Although Commodore Jones, finding he had acted upon misinformation, lowered the flag next day and tendered an apology to the provincial officials, the incident did not tend to relieve the tension which existed between the Mexicans and the Americans, for it emphasized the ease with which the country could be seized, and hinted with unmistakable plainness at the ultimate in-

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tentions of the United States. That our government intended to annex the Californias at the first opportunity that offered the Mexicans were perfectly aware, for, aroused by the descriptions of the unbelievable beauty and fertility of the country as sent back by those daring souls who had made their way across the ranges, the hearts of our people were set upon its acquisition. The great Bay of San Francisco, large enough to shelter the navies of the world and the gateway to the Orient, the fruitful, sun-kissed land beyond the Sierras, the political domination of America, and the commercial domination of the Pacific—such were the visions which inspired our people and the motives which animated our leaders, and which were intensified by the fear of England's designs upon this western land.

As the numbers of the American settlers gradually increased, the jealousy and suspicion of the Mexican officials became more pronounced. As early as 1826 they had driven Captain Jedediah Smith, the first American to make his way to California by the overland route, back into the mountains, in the midst of winter, without companions and without provisions, to be killed by the Indians. In 1840 more than one hundred American settlers were suddenly arrested by the

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Mexican authorities on a trumped-up charge of having plotted against the government, marched under military guard to Monterey, and confined in the prison there under circumstances of the most barbarous cruelty, some fifty of them being eventually deported to Mexico in chains. Thomas O. Larkin, the American consul at Monterey, upon visiting the prisoners in the local jail where they were confined, found that the cells had no floors, and that the poor fellows stood in mud and water to their ankles. Sixty of the prisoners he found crowded into a single room, twenty feet long and eighteen wide, in which they were so tightly packed that they could not all sit at the same time, much less lie down. The room being without windows or other means of ventilation, the air quickly became so fetid that they were able to live only by dividing themselves into platoons which took turns in standing at the door and getting a few breaths of air through the bars. These men, whose only crime was that they were Americans, were confined in this hell-hole, without food except such as their friends were able to smuggle in to them by bribing the sentries, for eight days. And this treatment was accorded them, remember, not because they were conspirators—for no one knew better than the Mexican authorities that they were

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not—but because it seemed the easiest means of driving them out of the country. Throughout the half-dozen years that ensued American settlers were subjected to a systematic campaign of annoyance, persecution, and imprisonment on innumerable frivolous pretexts, being released only on their promise to leave California immediately. By 1845, therefore, the harassed Americans, in sheer desperation, were ready to grasp the first opportunity which presented itself to end this intolerable tyranny for good and all.

It was not only the outrageous treatment to which they were subjected, however, nor the weakness and instability of the government under which they were living, nor even the insecurity of their lives and property and the discouragements to industry, which led the American settlers to decide to end Mexican rule in the Californias. Texas had recently been annexed by the United States against the protests of Mexico, an American army of invasion was massed along the Rio Grande, and war was certain. It required no extraordinary degree of intelligence, then, to foresee that the coming hostilities would almost inevitably result in Mexico losing her Californian provinces. Now it was a matter of common knowledge that the Mexican Government was seriously consider-



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ing the advisability of ceding the Californias to Great Britain, and thus accomplishing the three-fold purpose of wiping out the large Mexican debt due to British bankers, of winning the friendship and possibly the active assistance of England in the approaching war with the United States, and of preventing the Californias from falling into American hands. The danger was, therefore, that England would step in before us. Nor was the danger any imaginary one. Her ships were watching our ships on the Mexican coast, and her secret agents who infested the country were keeping their fingers constantly on the pulse of public opinion. Though it remains to this day a matter of conjecture as to just how far England was prepared to go to obtain this territory, there is little doubt that she had laid her plans for its acquisition in one way or another. If California was to be added to the Union, therefore, it must be by a sudden and daring stroke.

Meanwhile the authorities at Washington had not been idle. Though Larkin was ostensibly the American consul at Monterey and nothing more, in reality he was clothed with far greater powers, having been hurried from Washington to California for the express purpose of secretly encouraging an insurrectionary movement among the American

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settlers, and of keeping our government informed of the plans of the Mexicans and British. Receiving information that a powerful British fleet—the largest, in fact, which had ever been seen in Pacific waters—was about to sail for the coast of California, the administration promptly issued orders for a squadron of war-ships under Commodore John Drake Sloat to proceed at full speed to the Pacific coast, the commander being given secret instructions to back up Consul Larkin in any action which he might take, and upon receiving word that the United States had declared war against Mexico to immediately occupy the Californian ports. Then ensued one of the most momentous races in history, over a course extending half-way round the world, the contestants being the war-fleets of the two most powerful maritime nations, and the prize seven hundred thousand square miles of immensely rich territory and the mastery of the Pacific. Commodore Sloat laid his course around the Horn, while the English commander, Admiral Trowbridge, chose the route through the Indian Ocean. The first thing he saw as he entered the Bay of Monterey was the American squadron lying at anchor in the harbor.

Never was there a better example of that form of territorial expansion which has come to be

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known as "pacific penetration" than the American conquest of California; never were the real designs of a nation and the schemes of its secret agents more successfully hidden. Consul Larkin, as I have already said, was quietly working, under confidential instructions from the State Department, to bring about a revolution in California without overt aid from the United States; the Californian coast towns lay under the guns of American war-ships, whose commanders likewise had secret instructions to land marines and take possession of the country at the first opportunity that presented itself; and, as though to complete the chain of American emissaries, early in 1846 there came riding down from the Sierran passes, at the head of what pretended to be an exploring and scientific expedition, the man who was to set the machinery of conquest actually in motion.

The commander of the expedition was a young captain of engineers, named John Charles Frémont, who, as the result of two former journeys of exploration into the wilderness beyond the Rockies, had already won the sobriquet of "The Pathfinder." Born in Savannah, of a French father and a Virginian mother, he was a strange combination of aristocrat and frontiersman. Dashing, debonair, fearless, reckless, a magnificent horseman, a dead-shot, a hardy and intrepid ex-

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plorer, equally at home at a White House ball or at an Indian powwow, he was probably the most picturesque and romantic figure in the United States. These characteristics, combined with extreme good looks, a gallant manner, and the great public reputation he had won by the vivid and interesting accounts he had published of his two earlier journeys, had completely captured the popular imagination, so that the young explorer had become a national idol. In the spring of 1845 he was despatched by the National Government on a third expedition, which had as its ostensible object the discovery of a practicable route from the Rocky Mountains to the mouth of the Columbia River, but which was really to lend encouragement to the American settlers in California in any secession movement which they might be planning and to afford them active assistance should war be declared. Just how far the government had instructed Frémont to go in fomenting a revolution will probably never be known, but there is every reason to believe that his father-in-law, United States Senator Benton, had advised him to seize California if an opportunity presented itself, and to trust to luck (and the senator's influence) that the government would approve rather than repudiate his action.

All told, Frémont's expedition numbered barely



The Sacramento Valley in 1845.

From a steel engraving of the period.



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threescore men—no great force, surely, with which to overthrow a government and win an empire. In advance of the little column rode the four Delaware braves whom Frémont had brought with him from the East to act as scouts and trackers, and whose cunning and woodcraft he was willing to match against that of the Indians of the plains. Close on their heels rode the Pathfinder himself, clad from neck to heel in fringed buckskin, at his belt a heavy army revolver and one of those vicious, double-bladed knives to which Colonel Bowie, of Texas, had already given his name, and on his head a jaunty, broad-brimmed hat, from beneath which his long, yellow hair fell down upon his shoulders. At his bridle arm rode Kit Carson, the most famous of the plainsmen, whose exploits against the Indians were even then familiar stories in every American household. Behind these two stretched out the rank and file of the expedition—bronze-faced, bearded, resolute men, well mounted, heavily armed, and all wearing the serviceable dress of the frontier.

Frémont found the American settlers scattered through the interior in a state of considerable alarm, for rumors had reached them that the Mexican Government had decided to drive them out of the country, and that orders had been issued

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to the provincial authorities to incite the Indians against them. As they dwelt for the most part in small, isolated communities, scattered over a great extent of country, it was obvious that, if these rumors were true, their lives were in imminent peril. They had every reason to expect, moreover, that the news of war between Mexico and the United States would bring down on them those forms of punishment and retaliation for which the Mexicans were notorious. They were confronted, therefore, with the alternative of abandoning the homes they had built and the fields they had tilled and seeking refuge in flight across the mountains, or of remaining to face those perils inseparable from border warfare. Nor did it take them long to decide upon resistance, for they were not of the breed which runs away.

Leaving most of his men encamped in the foothills, Frémont pushed on to Monterey, then the most important settlement in Upper California, and the seat of the provincial government, where he called upon Don José Castro, the Mexican commandant, explained the purposes of his expedition, and requested permission for his party to proceed northward to the Columbia through the San Joaquin valley. This permission Castro grudgingly gave, but scarcely had Frémont broken camp be-



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fore the Mexican, who had hastily gathered an overwhelming force of soldiers and vaqueros, set out upon the trail of the Americans with the avowed purpose of surprising and exterminating them. Fortunately for the Americans, Consul Larkin, getting wind of Castro's intended treachery, succeeded in warning Frémont, who instead of taking his chances in a battle on the plains against a greatly superior force, suddenly occupied the precipitous hill lying back of and commanding Monterey, known as the Hawk's Peak, intrenched himself there, and then sent word to Castro to come and take him. Although the Mexican commander made a military demonstration before the American intrenchments, he was wise enough to refrain from attempting to carry a position of such great natural strength and defended by such unerring shots as were Frémont's frontiersmen. Four days later Frémont, feeling that there was nothing to be gained by holding the position longer, and confident that the Mexicans would be only too glad to see his back, quietly broke camp one night and resumed his march toward Oregon.

Scarcely had he crossed the Oregon line, however, before he was overtaken by a messenger on a reeking horse, who had been despatched by

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Consul Larkin to inform him that an officer with urgent despatches from Washington had arrived at Monterey and was hastening northward to overtake him. Frémont immediately turned back, and on the shores of the Greater Klamath Lake met Lieutenant Archibald Gillespie, who had travelled from New York to Vera Cruz by steamer, had crossed Mexico to Mazatlán on horseback, and had been brought up the Pacific coast to Monterey in an American war-ship. The exact contents of the despatches with which Gillespie had been intrusted will probably never be known, for having reason to believe that his mission was suspected by the Mexicans, and being fearful of arrest, he had destroyed the despatches after committing their contents to memory. These contents he communicated to Frémont, and the fact that the latter immediately turned his horse's head Californiawards is the best proof that they contained definite instructions for him to stir up the American settlers to revolt and so gain California for the Union by what some one has aptly described as "neutral conquest."

The news of Frémont's return spread among the scattered settlers as though by wireless, and from all parts of the country hardy, determined men came pouring into camp to offer him their serv-

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ices. But his hands were tied. His instructions from Washington, while ordering him to lend his encouragement to an insurrectionary movement, expressly forbade him to take the initiative in any hostilities until he received word that war with Mexico had been declared—and that word had not yet come. These facts he communicated to the settlers. Frémont's assurance that the American Government sympathized with their aspirations for independence, and could be counted upon to back up any action they might take to secure it, was all that the settlers needed. On the evening of June 13, 1846, some fifty Americans living along the Sacramento River met at the ranch of an old Indian-fighter and bear-hunter named Captain Meredith, and under his leadership rode across the country in a northwesterly direction through the night. Dawn found them close to the presidio of Sonoma, which was the residence of the Mexican general Vallejo and the most important military post north of San Francisco. Leaving their horses in the shelter of the forest, the Americans stole silently forward in the dimness of the early morning, overpowered the sentries, burst in the gates, and had taken possession of the town and surrounded the barracks before the garrison was fairly awake. General Vallejo and his officers were captured in their beds,

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and were sent under guard to a fortified ranch known as Sutter's fort, which was situated some distance in the interior. In addition to the prisoners, nine field-guns, several hundred stands of arms, and a considerable supply of ammunition fell into the hands of the Americans. The first blow had been struck in the conquest of California.

The question now arose as to what they should do with the town they had captured, for Frémont had no authority to take it over for the United States, or to muster the men who took it into the American service. The embattled settlers found themselves, in fact, to be in the embarrassing position of being men without a country. After a council of war they decided to organize a *pro-tem.* government of their own to administer the territory until such time as it should be formally annexed to the United States. I doubt if a government was ever established so quickly and under such rough-and-ready circumstances. After an informal ballot it was announced that William B. Ide, a leading spirit among the settlers, had been unanimously elected governor and commander-in-chief "of the independent forces"; John H. Nash, who had been a justice of the peace in the East before he had emigrated to California, being named chief justice of the new republic.

For a full-fledged nation not to have a flag of

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its own was, of course, unthinkable; so, as most of its citizens were hunters and adventurers, when some one suggested that the grizzly bear, because of its indomitable courage and tenacity and its ferocity when aroused, would make a peculiarly appropriate emblem for the new banner, the suggestion was adopted with enthusiasm, and a committee of two was appointed to put it into immediate execution. A young settler named William Ford, who had been imprisoned by the Mexicans in the jail at Sonoma, and who had been released when his countrymen captured the place, and William Todd, an emigrant from Illinois, were the makers of the flag. On a piece of unbleached cotton cloth, a yard wide and a yard and a half long, they painted the rude figure of a grizzly bear ready to give battle. This strange banner they raised, at noon on June 14, amid a storm of cheers and a salute from the captured cannon, on the staff where so recently had floated the flag of Mexico, and from it the Bear Flag Republic took its name.

Scarcely had Frémont received the news of the capture of Sonoma and the proclamation of the Bear Flag Republic than word reached him that a large force of Mexicans was on its way to retake the town. Disregarding his instructions from Washington, and throwing all caution to

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the winds, Frémont instantly decided to stake everything on giving his support to his imperilled countrymen. His own men reinforced by a number of volunteers, he arrived at Sonoma, after a forced march of thirty-six hours, only to find the Bear Flag men still in possession. The number of the enemy, as well as their intentions, had, it seems, been greatly exaggerated, the force in question being but a small party of troopers which Castro had despatched to the Mission of San Rafael, on the north shore of San Francisco Bay, to prevent several hundred cavalry remounts which were stabled there from falling into the hands of the Americans. Realizing the value of these horses to the settlers in the guerilla campaign which seemed likely to ensue, Frémont succeeded in capturing them after a sharp skirmish with the Mexicans. Hurrying back to Sonoma, he learned that during his absence Ide and his men had repulsed an attack by a body of Mexican regulars, under General de la Torre, reinforced by a band of ruffians and desperadoes led by an outlaw named Padilla, inflicting so sharp a defeat that the only enemies left in that part of the country were the scattered fugitives from this force, these being hunted down and summarily dealt with by the frontiersmen. Having now irrevocably committed himself to the insurgent cause, and feeling

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that, if he were to be hanged, it might as well be for a sheep as for a lamb, Frémont decided on the capture of San Francisco. The San Francisco of 1846 had little in common with the San Francisco of to-day, remember, for on the site where the great Western metropolis now stands there was nothing but a village consisting of a few-score adobe houses and the Mexican presidio, or fort, the latter containing a considerable supply of arms and ammunition. Accompanied by Kit Carson, Lieutenant Gillespie, and a small detachment of his men, Frémont crossed the Bay of San Francisco in a sailing-boat by night, and took the Mexican garrison so completely by surprise that they surrendered without firing a shot. The gateway to the Orient was ours.

Frémont now prepared to take the offensive against Castro, who was retreating on Los Angeles, but just as he was about to start on his march southward a messenger brought the great news that Admiral Sloat, having received word that hostilities had commenced along the Rio Grande, had landed his marines at Monterey, and on July 7, to the thunder of saluting war-ships, had raised the American flag over the presidio, and had proclaimed the annexation of California to the Union. When the Bear Flag men learned the great news they went into a frenzy of enthusiasm;

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whooping, shouting, singing snatches of patriotic songs, and firing their pistols in the air. Quickly the standard of the fighting grizzly was lowered and the flag of stripes and stars hoisted in its place, while the rough-clad, bearded settlers, who had waited so long and risked so much that this very thing might come to pass, sang the Doxology with tears running down their faces. As the folds of the familiar banner caught the breeze and floated out over the flat-roofed houses of the little town, Ide, the late chief of the three-weeks republic, jumping on a powder barrel, swung his sombrero in the air and shouted: "Now, boys, all together, three cheers for the Union!" The moist eyes and the lumps in the throats brought by the sight of the old flag did not prevent the little band of frontiersmen from responding with a roar which made the windows of Sonoma rattle.

Now, as a matter of fact, Admiral Sloat had placed himself in a very embarrassing position, for he had based his somewhat precipitate action in seizing California on what he had every reason to believe was authentic news that war between the United States and Mexico had actually begun, but which proved next day to be merely an unconfirmed rumor. If a state of war really did exist, then both Sloat and Frémont were justified in their aggressions; but if it did not, then they



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might have considerable difficulty in explaining their action in commencing hostilities against a nation with which we were at peace. So Sloat began "to get cold feet," asserting that he was forced to act as he had because he had received reliable information that the British, whose fleet was lying off Monterey, were on the point of seizing California themselves. Frémont, on his part, claimed to have acted in defence of the American settlers in the interior, who without his assistance would have been massacred by the Mexicans. At this juncture Commodore Stockton arrived at Monterey in the frigate *Congress*, and as Sloat was now thoroughly frightened and only too glad to transfer the responsibility he had assumed to other shoulders, Stockton, who was the junior officer, asked for and readily obtained permission to assume command of the operations. Frémont, who had reached Monterey with several hundred riflemen, was appointed commander-in-chief of the land forces by Stockton, and was ordered to embark his men on one of the war-ships and proceed at once to capture San Diego, at that time by far the most important place in California. Stockton himself, after raising the American flag over San Francisco and Santa Barbara, sailed down the coast to San Pedro, the port of Los Angeles, where he disembarked a force of blue-

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jackets and marines for the taking of the latter city, within which the Mexican commander, General Castro, had shut himself up with a considerable number of troops, and where he promised to make a desperate resistance.

As Stockton came marching up from San Pedro at the head of his column he was met by a Mexican carrying a flag of truce and bearing a message from Castro warning the American commander in the most solemn terms that if his forces dared to set foot within Los Angeles they would be going to their own funerals. "Present my compliments to General Castro," Stockton told the messenger, "and ask him to have the kindness to have the church bells tolled for our funerals at eight o'clock to-morrow morning, for at that hour I shall enter the city." Upon receipt of this disconcerting message Castro slipped out of Los Angeles that night, without firing a shot in its defence, and at eight o'clock on the following morning, Stockton, just as he had promised, came riding in at the head of his men.

After garrisoning the surrounding towns and ridding the countryside of prowling bands of Mexican guerillas, Stockton officially proclaimed California a Territory of the United States, instituted a civil government along American lines, and appointed Frémont as the first Territorial

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governor. Before the year 1846 had drawn to a close these two Americans, the one a rough-and-ready sailor, the other a youthful and impetuous soldier, assisted by a few hundred marines and frontiersmen, had completed the conquest and pacification of a territory having a greater area and greater natural resources than those of all the countries conquered by Napoleon put together. Thus ended the happy, lazy, luxury-loving society of Spanish California. Another society, less luxurious, less light-hearted, less contented, but more energetic, more progressive, and better fitted for the upbuilding of a nation, took its place. There are still to be found in California a few men, white-haired and stoop-shouldered now, who were themselves actors in this drama I have described, and who delight to tell of those stirring days when Frémont and his frontiersmen came riding down from the passes, and the embattled settlers of Sonoma founded their short-lived Republic of the Bear.



**THE KING OF THE FILIBUSTERS**



## THE KING OF THE FILIBUSTERS

**I**N one of the public squares of San José, which is the capital of Costa Rica, there is a marble statue of a stern-faced young woman, with her foot planted firmly on a gentleman's neck. The young woman is symbolic of the Republic of Costa Rica, and the gentleman ground beneath her heel is supposed to represent the American filibuster and soldier of fortune, William Walker. Now, before going any farther, justice requires me to explain that Walker's downfall was not due to Costa Rica, as the citizens of that little republic would like the world to believe, and as the bombastic statue in the plaza of its capital would lead one to suppose, but to a far greater and richer power, whose victories were won with dollars instead of bayonets, whose capital was New York City, and whose name was Cornelius Vanderbilt.

To the younger generation the name of William Walker carries no significance, but to the gray-heads whose recollections antedate the Civil War the mention of it brings back a flood of thrilling

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memories, while throughout the length and breadth of that wild region lying between the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and the Isthmus of Panama it is still a synonym for unfaltering courage. His weakness was ambition; his fault was failure. Had he succeeded in realizing his ambitions—and he failed only by the narrowest of margins—he would have been lauded as another Cortez, and would have received stars and crosses instead of bullets. Had his life not been cut short by a Honduran firing-party, it is possible, indeed probable, that, instead of there being six states in Central America there would be but one, and in that one the institution of slavery might still exist. Though I have scant sympathy with the motives which animated Walker, and though I believe that his death was for the best good of the Central American peoples, he was the very antithesis of the cutthroat and blackguard and outlaw which he has been painted, being, on the contrary, a very brave and honest gentleman, of whom his countrymen have no reason to feel ashamed, and that is why I am going to tell his story.

The eldest son of a Scotch banker, Walker was born in 1824 in Nashville, Tennessee. His father, a stiff-necked Presbyterian who held morning and evening prayers, asked an interminable grace be-



## The King of the Filibusters

fore every meal, and took his family to church three times on Sunday, had set his heart on his son entering the ministry, and it was with a pulpit and parish in view that young Walker was educated. By the time that he was ready to enter the theological school, however, he decided that he preferred M.D. instead of D.D. after his name, whereupon, much to his father's disappointment, he insisted on taking the medical course at the University of Tennessee, following it up by two years at the University of Edinburgh. Thoroughly equipped to practise his chosen profession, he opened an office in Philadelphia, but in a few months the routine of a doctor's life palled upon him, so, taking down his brass door-plate, he went to New Orleans, where, after two years of study, he was admitted to the bar. But he soon found that briefs and summonses were scarcely more to his liking than prescriptions and pills, so, with the prompt decision which was one of his most marked characteristics, he closed his law-office and obtained a position as editorial writer on a New Orleans newspaper. Within a year the restlessness which had led him to abandon the church, medicine, and the bar caused him to give up journalism in its turn. At this time, 1852, the Californian gold fever was at its mad height, and

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to the Pacific coast were pouring streams of fortune-seekers and adventure-lovers from every quarter of the globe. One of the latter was Walker, and it was while editor of the San Francisco *Herald*, when only twenty-eight years old, that his amazing career really began.

Walker was not of the sort who could content himself for any length of time within the stuffy walls of an editorial sanctum. His fingers were made to grasp something more virile than the pen. Nor did he make any attempt to win a fortune with pick and shovel in the gold fields. His ambitions were neither intellectual nor mercenary, but political, for from his boyhood days in Nashville he had dreamed, as all boys worth their salt do dream, of some day founding a state, with himself as its ruler, in that wild and savage region below the Rio Grande. Enlisting half a hundred kindred souls from the hordes of the reckless, the adventurous, and the needy which were pouring into California by boat and wagon-train, Walker chartered a small vessel and set sail from San Francisco for the coast of Mexico. His avowed object was a purely humanitarian one: to protect the women and children living along the Mexican frontier from massacre by the Indians, the state of Sonora being at that time more under the

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dominion of the Apaches than it was under that of Mexico. But it was not the protection of the women and children—though they needed protection badly enough, goodness knows—which led Walker to embark on this hare-brained expedition. He was lured southward by a dream of empire, an empire of which he should be the ruler, and which should be founded on slavery. By this time, remember, the slavery question in the United States had become exceedingly acute, the future of the institution on this continent largely depending upon whether the next States admitted to the Union should be slave or free. Walker was a sincere, even fanatical, believer in slavery. Born and reared in an atmosphere of slavery, to Walker it was as sacred, as God-given an institution as the Fast of Ramadan is to the Moslem or the Feast of the Passover to the Jew. Convinced that friction over this question would sooner or later force the slave-holding States to secede from the Union, he determined to extend the area of slavery by conquering that portion of northern Mexico immediately adjacent to the United States, to establish an independent government there, and eventually to annex his country to the South, thus counteracting the growing movement for abolition, which, with the admission of new Northern

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territories, already hinted at the overthrow of slavery.

Financed by Southern friends whose motives were probably considerably less altruistic than his own, Walker landed at Cape San Lucas, the extreme southern point of the Mexican territory of Southern California, in October, 1852, with an "army of invasion" of forty-five men. Instead of hastening to protect the women and children of whom he had talked so feelingly, he sailed up the coast to the territorial capital of La Paz, which he seized, where he issued a proclamation announcing the annexation of the neighboring state of Sonora, in which he had not yet set foot, giving to the two states the name of the "Republic of Sonora," and proclaiming himself its first president. As soon as the news of this initial success reached San Francisco, Walker's sympathizers there busied themselves in recruiting reinforcements, three hundred desperadoes who boasted that they were afraid of nothing "on two feet or four" being shipped to him at La Paz a few weeks later. These men were looked upon as hard cases even in the San Francisco of the early fifties, and, if they had not consented to leave the country to assist Walker, many of them would probably have left it sooner or later at the

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end of a rope in the hands of the local vigilance committee. When this force of scoundrels arrived at La Paz and found themselves under the command of a quiet, mild-mannered, beardless youth of twenty-eight, instead of the brawny, foul-mouthed, swashbuckling leader whom they had expected, they promptly hatched a scheme to blow up the magazine, seize the ship and the stores of the expedition in the ensuing confusion, and make their way back to the United States, leaving Walker to shift for himself. Warning of the conspiracy reaching him, however, Walker displayed for the first time those traits which were later to make his name a word of terror in the ears of men who bragged that they feared neither God nor man. Arresting the ringleaders, he had two of them tried by court-martial and shot within an hour; two of the others he ordered flogged and drummed out of camp, to take their chances among the hostile Mexicans and Indians. But, though this act gained Walker the fear and respect of his followers, the newcomers among them had no stomach for a leader who could punish, so when he called for volunteers to accompany him in the conquest of Sonora less than a hundred men offered to follow him.

From the very first the shadow of failure hung

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over the enterprise. To begin with, there is no more savage and desolate region on the American continent than the peninsula of Lower California, it being so barren and destitute that even the lizards have to scramble for an existence. Mexicans and Indians hung upon the flanks of the little column night and day, as buzzards follow a dying steer. There was neither medicine nor medical instruments with the expedition, and the wounded died from lack of the most elementary care. Their shoes gave out and the men marched barefoot over sun-scorched rocks and needle cactus, leaving a trail of crimson behind them in the sand. Their provisions were soon exhausted, and their only food was beef which they killed on the march. For years afterward the route of that ill-fated expedition could be traced from La Paz to the Colorado River by the bleaching skeletons of the men who fell by the way. By the time the head of the Gulf of California was reached the expedition had dwindled to barely twoscore men. It was no longer a question of conquering Sonora; it was a question of getting back to the States alive.

With sinking heart, but imperturbable face, Walker led his little band of starving, fever-racked, exhausted men toward the Californian

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line. Three miles of road led through a mountain pass into the United States and safety. But the pass was held by a force of Mexican soldiery under Colonel Melendrez, and his Indian allies were scattered over the plain below. And, as though to give a final touch of irony to the situation in which Walker and his men found themselves, from their position on the Mexican hillside they could look across into American territory, could see the American flag, their flag, fluttering over the military post south of San Diego, could even see the sun glinting upon the bits and sabres of the troop of American cavalry drawn up along the border. Four Indians bearing a flag of truce approached. They bore a message from the Mexican commander to the filibusters. If they would surrender their leader and give up their arms, Melendrez sent word, they would be permitted to leave the country unmolested. But after you have fought and bled and marched and starved with a man for a year, you are not likely to abandon him, particularly when the end is in sight, so they sent back word to Melendrez that if he wanted their arms he would have to come and take them. Meanwhile the American commander, Major McKinstry, had drawn up his troopers along the boundary-line and awaited the

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result of the unequal struggle like an umpire at a foot-ball game. Walker, who knew perfectly well that he deserved no aid from the United States, and that he would get none, appreciated that if he was to get out of this predicament alive it must be by his own wits. Concealing a dozen of his men among the rocks and sage-brush which lined the road on either side, with the remainder of his force he pretended to beat a panic-stricken retreat. Melendrez, confident that it was now all over but the shouting, swept down the road in pursuit. But as the Mexicans rode into the ambush which Walker had prepared for them the hidden filibusters emptied a dozen saddles at a single volley, and the soldiers, terrified and demoralized, wheeled and fled for their lives. Thirty minutes later the President, the Cabinet, and all that remained of the standing army of the late Republic of Sonora stumbled across the American boundary and surrendered to Major McKinstry. It was May 8, 1854, and in such fashion Walker celebrated his thirtieth birthday.

Sent to San Francisco as a political prisoner, Walker was tried for violating the neutrality laws of the United States, was acquitted—for the members of a Californian jury could not but sympathize with such a man—and once again found himself



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writing editorials for the San Francisco *Herald*. His narrow escape from death in Mexico had only served to whet his appetite for adventure, however, so when he was not doing his newspaper work he was poring over an atlas in search of some other land where a determined man might carve out a career for himself with his sword. Staring at the map of Middle America, his finger again and again paused, as though by instinct, on Nicaragua. Here was indeed a fertile field for the filibuster. Not only was the country enormously rich in every form of natural resources, but it had a kindly and moderately healthy climate, and, what was the most important of all, owing to its peculiar geographical position, it commanded what was at that time one of the great trade-routes of the world. At this time there were three routes to the Californian gold-fields: one, the long and weary voyage around the Horn; another, by the dangerous and costly Overland Trail; and the third, which was the shortest, cheapest, and most popular, across Nicaragua. If you will glance at the map, you will see that, barring the Isthmus of Panama, which is several hundred miles farther south, Nicaragua is the narrowest neck of land between the two great oceans, and that in the middle of this neck is the great Lake Nicaragua,

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which is upward of fifty miles in width. An American corporation known as the Accessory Transit Company, of which the first Cornelius Vanderbilt was president, had obtained a concession from the Nicaraguan Government to transport passengers across Central America by this route. Passengers *en route* from New York or New Orleans to the gold-fields were landed by the company's steamers at Greytown, on the Atlantic coast of Nicaragua, and transported thence by light-draught steamers up the San Juan River to Lake Nicaragua. Here they were transferred to larger steamers and taken across the lake to Virgin Bay, the twelve-mile journey from there to the port of San Juan del Sur, on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua, being performed in carriages or on the backs of mules. During a single year twenty-five thousand passengers crossed Nicaragua by this route. It did not take Walker long to appreciate, therefore, that the man who succeeded in making himself master of this, the shortest route to California, would be in a position of considerable strength. Not only this, but Nicaragua was torn by internal dissensions; the army was divided into a dozen factions; the peasantry were down-trodden and poverty-stricken; the government was inconceivably corrupt; and the usual revolution was, of

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course, in progress, in which the sister republics of Honduras and Costa Rica were preparing to take a hand. Everything considered, Nicaragua's only hope of salvation from anarchy lay in finding for a ruler a man with an inflexible sense of justice and an iron hand. Walker determined to be that man.

In view of what I have already told of his exploits, you have doubtless pictured Walker as a tall, broad-shouldered man of commanding presence. As a matter of fact, he was nothing of the sort. In height he was but five feet five inches, and correspondingly slender. A remarkably square jaw and a long chin lent strength and determination to features which were plain almost to the point of coarseness. His eyes, which were of a singularly light gray, are universally spoken of as having been his most noticeable feature, for they were so large and fixed that the eyelids scarcely showed, and so penetrating that they seemed to bore holes into the person at whom they were looking. He was extremely taciturn, and when he did speak it was briefly and to the point. He had an unusual command of English, however, and his words were always carefully chosen. A stranger to fear, men who followed him on his campaigns assert that even under the most trying

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and perilous circumstances they had never seen him change countenance or betray emotion by so much as the contraction of a muscle. He was wholly lacking in personal vanity, and when in the field wore his trousers tucked into his boots, a flannel shirt open at the neck, and a faded black campaign hat. In a land where all three habits were universal, he neither drank, smoked, nor swore; he never looked at women; his word, once given, was never broken; the justice he meted out to disobedient followers, though stern to the point of brutality, was absolutely impartial. Highly ambitious, it is paying but the barest justice to his memory to say that his aspirations, however little we may sympathize with them, were wholly political and never mercenary, his whole career showing him to be utterly careless of wealth. Taking everything into consideration, we have good reason to be proud that William Walker was an American.

In 1854, as I have already remarked, Nicaragua was split asunder by civil war. The opposing parties were the Legitimists and the Democrats. What they were fighting about is of no consequence; perhaps they did not know themselves. In any event, in August of that year an American named Byron Cole, acting as an agent for Walker,

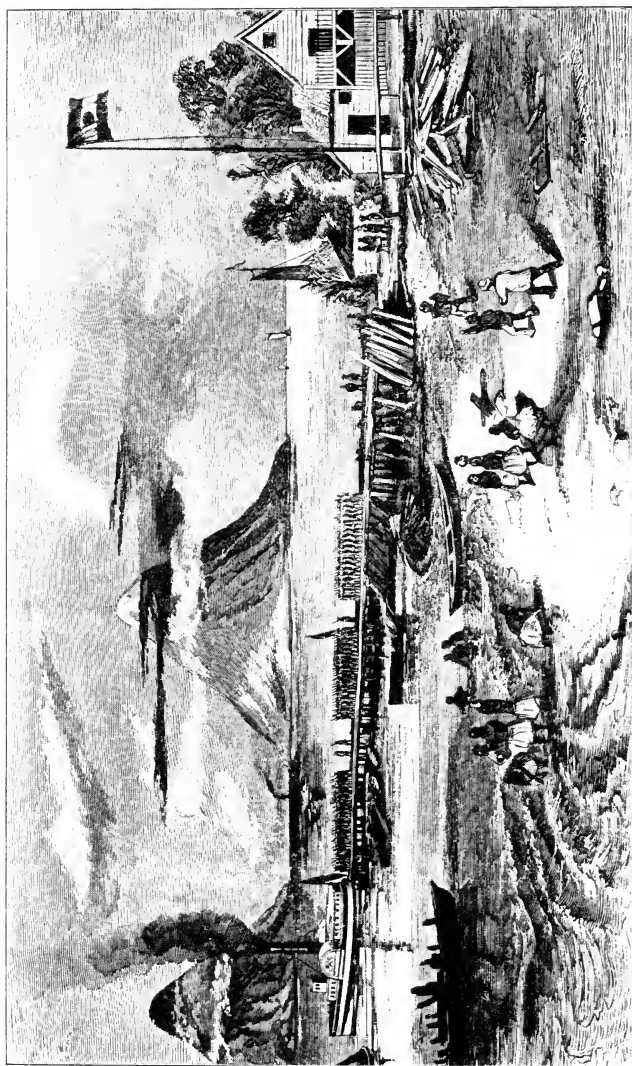
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arrived at the headquarters of the Democratic forces with a novel offer. Briefly, he agreed to contract to supply the Democratic party with three hundred American "colonists liable to military duty," these settlers to receive a grant of fifty-two thousand acres of land, and to have the privilege of becoming citizens of Nicaragua. This contract was approved and signed by General Castillon, the Democratic leader, and with it in his pocket Cole hastened to San Francisco and Walker. After taking the precaution of submitting the contract to the civil and military authorities in San Francisco, and receiving their assurances that it did not violate the neutrality laws of the United States, Walker immediately set about recruiting his "colonists," and in May, 1855, just a year after his escape from Mexico, he was ready to sail. Although, as I have said, the Federal authorities had passed upon the legality of the contract, it was a noticeable fact that the peaceable settlers took with them Winchester rifles instead of spades, and Colt's revolvers instead of hoes, and that the hold of the brig *Vesta*, on which they sailed from San Francisco, was filled with ammunition and machine guns instead of agricultural implements and machinery.

After a long and stormy voyage down the

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Pacific coast Walker and his men landed, on June 16, at the port of Realejo, in Nicaragua, where he was met by Castillon. Walker was at once commissioned a colonel; Achilles Kewen, who had just come from Cuba, where he had been fighting under the patriot Lopez, a lieutenant-colonel; and Timothy Crocker, a fighting Irishman, who was a veteran of Walker's Sonora expedition, a major; the corps being organized as an independent command under the name of *La Falange Americana*—the American Phalanx. At this time the Transit route from the Atlantic to the Pacific was held by the Legitimist forces, and these Walker was ordered to dislodge, it being essential to the success of the Democrats that they gain possession of this interoceanic highway. Accordingly, a week after setting foot in Nicaragua, Walker, at the head of fifty-seven of his Americans and one hundred and fifty native soldiers, set out for Rivas, a town on the western shore of Lake Nicaragua held by twelve hundred of the enemy. The first battle of his Nicaraguan campaign ended in the most complete disaster. At the first volley his native allies bolted, leaving the Americans surrounded by ten times their number of Legitimists. The enemy instantly perceived this defection, and pressed the Phalanx



General William Walker and his men, after a long and stormy voyage, landing at Virgin Bay,  
en route to Costa Rica.

From a print in the New York Public Library.





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so hard that its members were driven to take shelter behind a row of adobe huts. No one knew better than Walker that if the enemy charged he and his men were done for, so he decided to do the charging himself. Out from behind the huts dashed the red-shirted filibusters, firing as they came, and so ferocious was their onslaught that they succeeded in cutting their way through the encircling army and escaping into the jungle. Though six of the Americans were killed, including Walker's two lieutenants, Kewen and Crocker, and twice as many wounded, the battle of Rivas established the reputation of Americans in Central America for years to come, for a hundred and fifty of the enemy fell before their deadly fire.

Bleeding and exhausted from battle and travel, Walker and his men, after an all-night march through the jungle, limped into the port of San Juan del Sur, and, finding a Costa Rican vessel in the harbor, they seized it for their own use. Still bearing in mind the necessity of getting control of the Transit route, Walker gave his men only a few days in which to recover from their wounds and weariness, and then was off again, this time for Virgin Bay, the halting-place for passengers going east or west. Though in the fight which ensued Walker was outnumbered five to one, his

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losses were only three natives killed and a few Americans wounded, while one hundred and fifty of the enemy fell before the rifles of the filibusters. This disparity of losses emphasizes, as does nothing else, the deadliness of the American fire.

After the fight at Virgin Bay Walker received from California fifty recruits, thus bringing the force under his command up to some four hundred men, about a third of whom were Americans. The Legitimists, learning that he was planning to again attack Rivas, hastened to reinforce the garrison of that town by hurrying troops there from their headquarters at Granada, which was farther up the lake, planning to give Walker a warm and unexpected reception. But it was Walker who did the surprising, for, having his own channels of secret information, he no sooner learned of the weakened condition of Granada than he determined to direct his efforts against that place, instead of Rivas, and by capturing it to give the Legitimist cause a solar-plexus blow. Embarking his men on a small steamer with the announced intention of attacking Rivas, as soon as night fell he turned in the opposite direction and, with lights out and fires banked, steamed silently up the lake. Dawn found him off Granada, the garrison and inhabitants of which were sleeping off a

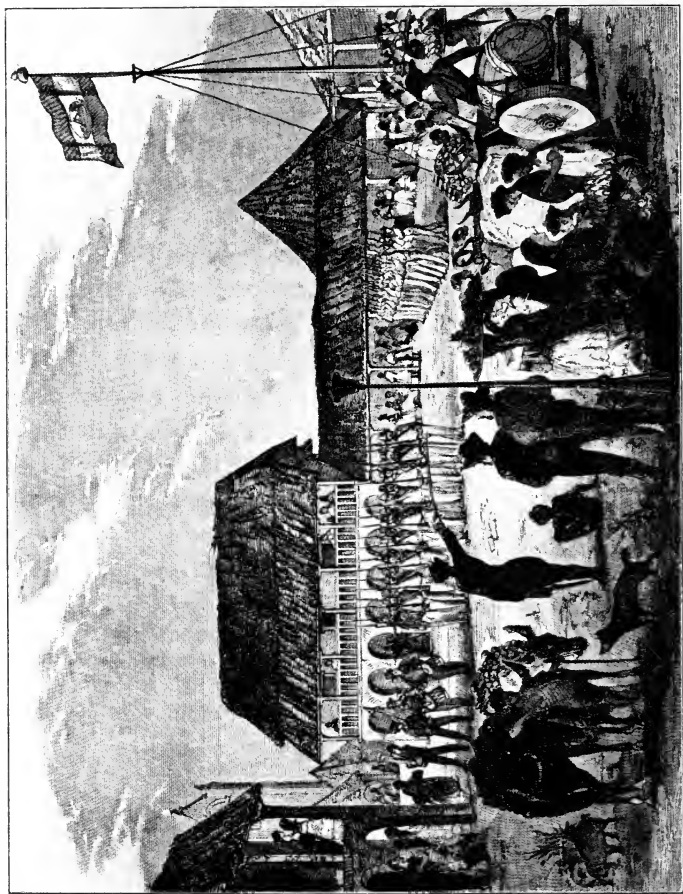
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drunken debauch with which they had celebrated a recent victory. Even the sentries drowsed at their posts. Unobserved, the Americans landed in the semi-darkness of the early dawn, and it was not until they had reached the very outskirts of the town that a sentry suddenly awakened to their presence and gave the alarm by letting off his rifle, the shot being instantly answered by a crackle of musketry as the Americans opened fire. "Charge!" shouted Walker, "Get at 'em! Get at em!" and dashed forward at a run, a revolver in each hand, with his followers, cheering like madmen, close at his heels. "Los Filibusteros! Los Filibusteros!" screamed the terror-stricken inhabitants, catching sight of the red shirts and scarlet hat-bands of the Americans. "Run for your lives!" The demoralized garrison made a brief and ineffective stand in the Plaza, and then threw down their arms. Walker was master of Granada. He at once instituted a military government, released over a hundred political prisoners confined in the local jail, policed the town as effectually as though it were a New England village, and when he caught one of his native soldiers in the act of looting, ran him through with his sword.

Walker was now in a position to dictate his own terms of peace, and, four months after he and his

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fifty-seven followers landed in Nicaragua, an armistice was arranged and the side to which the Americans had lent their aid was in power. A native named Rivas was made provisional president, and Walker was appointed commander-in-chief of the army, which at that time numbered about twelve hundred men. Though insignificant in numbers when judged by European standards, this was really a remarkable force, and perhaps the most effective for its size known to military history. The officers had all seen service under many flags and in many lands—in Cuba, Mexico, Brazil, Spain, Algeria, Italy, Egypt, Russia, India, China—and the men, nearly all of whom had been recruited in San Francisco, boasted that “California was the pick of the world, and they were the pick of California.” There was scarcely a man among them who could not flick the ashes from a cigar with his revolver at a hundred feet, or with his rifle hit a dollar held between a man’s thumb and forefinger at a hundred yards. All the strange, wild natures for whom even the mining-camps of California had grown too tame were drawn to Walker’s flag as iron filings are drawn to a magnet. Frederick Townsend Ward, the New England youth who raised, trained, and led the Ever-Victorious Army, who rose to be an



General Walker reviewing troops on the Grand Plaza, Granada.

From a print in the New York Public Library.



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admiral-general of China, and who performed the astounding exploits for which General Charles Gordon received the credit, gained much of his military training under Walker; Joaquin Miller, "the poet of the Sierras," was another of his devoted followers, while scores of the other men who fought under the blue-and-white banner with the scarlet star in later years achieved name and fame in many different lands.

Says General Charles Frederic Henningsen, the famous English soldier of fortune who was Walker's second in command: "I have heard two greasy privates disputing over the correct reading and comparative merits of Æschylus and Euripides. I have seen a soldier on guard incessantly scribbling strips of paper, which turned out to be a finely versified translation of his dog's-eared copy of the *Divina Commedia*." The same officer, who had fought with distinction under Don Carlos in Spain, under Schamyl in the Caucasus, and under Kossuth in Hungary, who had introduced the Minié rifle into the American service, and was a recognized authority on the use of artillery, and therefore knew whereof he spoke, also testifies to the heroism and astounding fortitude of Walker's men. "I have often seen them marching with a broken or a compound-fractured arm in

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splints, and using the other to fire the rifle or revolver. Those with a fractured thigh, or with wounds which rendered them incapable of removal, often (or rather, in early times, always) shot themselves, sooner than fall into the hands of the enemy. Such men do not turn up in the average of every-day life, nor do I ever expect to see their like again. I was on the Confederate side in many of the bloodiest battles of the late war, but I aver that if, at the end of that war I had been allowed to pick five thousand of the bravest Confederate or Federal soldiers I ever saw, and could resurrect and pit against them one thousand of such men as lie beneath the orange-trees of Nicaragua, I feel certain that the thousand would have scattered and utterly routed the five thousand within an hour. All military science failed, on a suddenly given field, before assailants who came on at a run, to close with their revolvers, and who thought little of charging a battery, pistol in hand." As a matter of fact, at the first battle of Rivas, ten Americans, all officers of the Phalanx, armed only with bowie-knives and revolvers, actually did charge and capture a battery manned by more than a hundred Costa Ricans, half of the little band being killed in that astounding exploit. Some estimate of the deeds of these



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unsung heroes, so many of whom lie in unmarked graves beneath an alien sky, may be gathered from the surgical reports, which showed that the proportion of wounds treated was *one hundred and thirty-seven to every hundred men*.

For several months after the taking of Granada and the establishment of a provisional government, the dove of peace hovered over Nicaragua as though desirous of alighting, but in February, 1856, it was driven away, at least for a time, by a fresh splutter of musketry along the southern frontier, where Costa Rica, alarmed by Walker's reputed ambition to make himself master of all Middle America, had begun an invasion with the expressed purpose of driving the *gringos* from Central American soil. After a few months of desperate fighting, in which the Americans fully maintained their reputation for reckless bravery, the Costa Ricans were driven across the border, and for a brief time the harassed Nicaraguans were able to exchange their rifles for their hoes. The country now being for the moment at peace, Rivas called a presidential election, announcing himself as the candidate of the Democrats. The Legitimists, recognizing in Walker the one strong man of the country, had the political shrewdness to choose him, their former enemy, to head their

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ticket. Two other candidates, Ferrer and Salazar, were also in the field. The election was regular in every respect, the voting being entirely free from the usual disturbances. According to the Nicaraguan constitution, every male inhabitant over eighteen years of age, criminals excepted, is entitled to the suffrage. When the votes were counted it was found that Rivas had received 867 votes; Salazar, 2,087; Ferrer, 4,447; and Walker, 15,835. By such an overwhelming majority, and in an absolutely fair election, was William Walker made President of Nicaragua—the first and only time an American has ever been chosen ruler of a foreign and independent state.

In all its troubled history Nicaragua has never been governed so justly and so wisely as it was by the American soldier of fortune. Had he been free from foreign interference there is little doubt that he would have made Nicaragua a progressive, prosperous, and contented country, and that he would in time have brought under one government and one flag all the states lying between Yucatan and Panama. But that was precisely what the peoples of those states were fearful of, so that, a few weeks after Walker was inaugurated, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Honduras, and San Salvador declared war. This time Walker took

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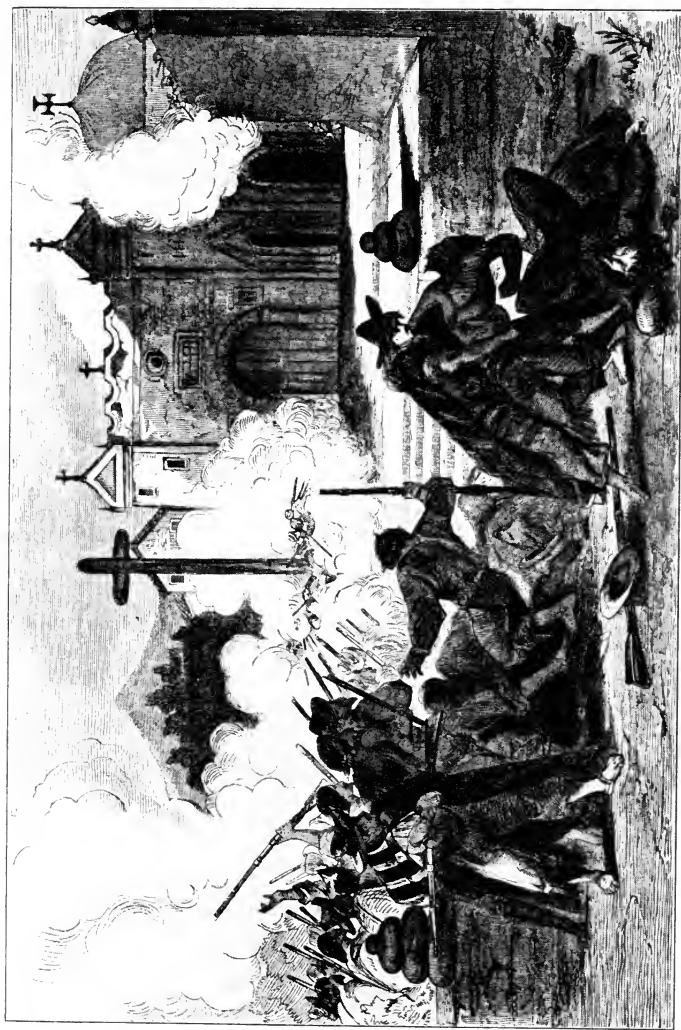
the field with three thousand trained and seasoned veterans, while opposed to him were twenty-one thousand of the allies. To describe the campaign that ensued would be as profitless as it would be tedious. The programme was always the same: the march by night through the silent, steaming jungle, and the stealthy surrounding of the threatened town in the early dawn; the warning crack of a startled sentry's rifle; the sudden rush of the filibusters with their high, shrill yell; the taking of the barracks and the cathedral in the Plaza, nearly always at the pistol's point; and the panic-stricken retreat of the little brown men in their uniforms of soiled white linen. Everywhere the arms of Walker were triumphant, and had he not at this time deliberately crossed the path of a soldier of fortune of quite another kind, in a few months more he would have realized his life-dream and have made himself the ruler of a Central American empire.

Upon investigating national affairs after his election, Walker found that the Accessory Transit Company had not lived up to the terms of its concession from the government of Nicaragua. By the terms of its charter it had agreed to pay to the Nicaraguan Government ten thousand dollars annually, and ten per cent of its net profits. The

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company claimed, and the government as stoutly denied, that the ten thousand dollars had been regularly paid, though the concessionaires admitted that the ten per cent on the profits had not been paid, giving as their excuse that there had been no profits. Upon an examination of the books it was quickly discovered that the company had so juggled with the accounts as to make it appear that there were no profits, when, as a matter of fact, the enterprise was an enormously profitable one. Upon discovering the fraud which had been perpetrated upon the government and people of Nicaragua, Walker demanded back payments to the amount of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars, and upon the company insolently refusing to pay them, he promptly revoked its charter, and seized its steamboats, wharves, and warehouses as security for the debt. Though this action was perfectly justifiable under the circumstances, it was, in view of the instability of Walker's position, an unwise move, for it made an implacable enemy of one of the most powerful and perhaps the most unscrupulous of the financiers of the time.

Cornelius Vanderbilt was not a person who could be bluffed or frightened. Infuriated at the action of the filibuster President, he immediately



The programme was always the same: the sudden rush of the filibusters with their high, shrill yell; the taking of the barracks and the cathedral in the Plaza.

From a print in the New York Public Library.



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withdrew from service the ships of the Transit Company in both oceans, thus cutting off communication between Nicaragua and the United States, and thereby Walker's source of supplies. But the grim old financier was not content with that. Recruiting a force of foreign adventurers on his own account, he despatched them to Central America with orders to assist the Costa Ricans, whom he liberally supplied with money, arms, and ammunition, in their war against Walker. Turning then to Washington, he had little difficulty in inducing Secretary of State Marcy, who was known to be one of his creatures, to use the government forces in driving Walker out of Nicaragua. To Commodore Mervin, who was his personal friend, Secretary Marcy communicated his wishes, or rather Vanderbilt's wishes, and these Mervin in turn transmitted to Captain Davis, commanding the man-of-war *St. Mary's*, who was ordered to proceed at full speed to San Juan del Sur, on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua, and to force Walker out of that country. Never has the government of the United States lent itself to the designs of predatory wealth so disgracefully and so flagrantly as it did when, at the dictation of Cornelius Vanderbilt, and without a shadow of right or excuse, it used the American navy to oust William Walker

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from the presidency to which he had been legally elected by a sovereign people. Its unjustified persecution of Walker to serve the spite of a money-lord forms one of the darkest stains on our national history.

When Davis arrived in Nicaragua he found Walker, his forces terribly reduced by death, fever, and desertion (for his means of supply had, as I have said, been stopped), besieged by the allies in the town of Rivas. Food was running short, the hospital was filled with wounded, and many of his men were helpless from fever. Captain Davis demanded that Walker surrender to him upon the ground of humanity, but the indomitable filibuster replied that when he did not have enough men left to man the guns he intended to take refuge on board his little schooner, the *Granada*, which lay in the harbor, and seek his fortune elsewhere. "You will not do that," answered Davis, "for I am going to seize your vessel." With his only hope of escape thus cut off, there was nothing for Walker to do but capitulate. Therefore, on May 1, 1857, William Walker, President of Nicaragua, whose title was as legally sound as that of any ruler in the world, surrendered to the forces his own country had sent against him, and one more argument was given to those who claimed



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that it was not liberty which we upheld and worshipped, but the almighty dollar. When Walker arrived in New York a few weeks later he found the city bedecked with flags and bunting in his honor. On but two other occasions has the American metropolis given such a reception to a visitor: once when Kossuth, the Hungarian patriot, rode up Broadway, and years later, when Dewey returned, fresh from his victory at Manila. Walker's drive from the Battery to Madison Square was like a triumphal progress, for his gallantry in action and his successes against overwhelming odds had aroused the admiration of his countrymen, just as his outrageous treatment by the government had excited their indignation. Though legally he had serious grounds for complaint, he received scant consideration when he placed his demands for reparation before the Department of State at Washington. But the cold shoulder turned toward him by official Washington was more than made up for by the welcome he received in the South, where he was acclaimed as a hero and a martyr. He was banqueted in every town and city from Baltimore to New Orleans, and when he entered a box in the opera-house of the latter place, the audience, forgetting the play, rose as one man to cheer him.

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Within a month Walker had raised enough money and recruits in the South to enable him to try his fortunes once more in Nicaragua. Sailing from New Orleans with one hundred and fifty men, he landed at San Juan del Norte, on the Caribbean side, marched upon and captured the town of Castillo Viejo together with four of the Transit Company's steamers, and was, indeed, in a fair way to again make himself master of Nicaragua when the United States once more interfered, the frigate *Wabash*, under command of Commodore Hiram Pawlding, dropping anchor in a position where her guns commanded the filibusters' camp, her commander demanding Walker's immediate surrender. The flag-officer who presented Walker with Pawlding's demand tactlessly remarked: "General, I'm sorry to see you here. A man like you deserves to command better men." "If I had even a third of the force you have brought against me," Walker responded grimly, "I'd soon show you who commands the better men." For the third time in his career Walker was forced to surrender to his own countrymen, and was sent north under parole as a prisoner of war. But, although Pawlding had acted precisely as Davis had done, President Buchanan, instead of thanking him, not only pub-

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licly reprimanded him, but retired him from active service, and when Walker presented himself at the White House as a prisoner, refused to receive his surrender, or to recognize him as being in the custody of the United States. All of which, however, was scant consolation for Walker.

To regain the presidency of which he had been unjustly deprived had now become an obsession with Walker. In spite of a proclamation issued by President Buchanan forbidding him to take further part in Central American affairs, he sailed from Mobile, on December 1, 1858, with a hundred and fifty of his veterans. His voyage was brought to a sudden and wholly unlooked-for termination, however, for he was wrecked in a gale off the coast of Honduras, whence he was rescued by a British war-ship which happened to be in the vicinity and brought back to the United States. By this time Walker had become almost as much of a nightmare to the governments of the United States and Great Britain (for the latter, both because of the proximity of her colony of British Honduras and of her large financial interests in the other Central American countries, had no desire to see that region again plunged into war) as Napoleon was to the Holy Alliance, and as a result both the Atlantic and Pacific coasts

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of Nicaragua were patrolled by the war-ships of the two nations to prevent Walker's return. Appreciating that, under the circumstances, it was about as easy for him to land on Nicaraguan soil as it was to land on the moon, Walker, with a hundred of his devoted followers, slipped silently out of Mobile harbor on an August night in 1860, and landed, a few days later, on a little island off the coast of Honduras known as Ruatan.

And so we come to the last chapter in this extraordinary man's extraordinary career. Within a day after his landing at Ruatan, Walker had crossed to the mainland and captured the important seaport of Trujillo. But the ill-fortune which from the beginning had dogged him like a shadow was not to desert him now, for scarcely had the flag of Honduras which fluttered above the barracks been replaced by the blue-and-white banner of the filibusters when a British frigate dropped anchor off the town. Twenty minutes later a boat's crew of British bluejackets tossed their oars as they ran alongside Trujillo wharf, and a naval officer immaculate in white and gold, stepping ashore, inquired for General Walker, and presented him with a message. It was from Captain Salmon, commanding the British man-of-war *Icarus*, which lay outside, and de-

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manded the immediate evacuation of the city by the filibusters, as the British Government held a mortgage on the revenues of the port and intended to protect them, by force if necessary. Walker answered that as he had made Trujillo a free port, the British claims were no longer valid. "Captain Salmon instructs me to inform you, sir," replied the British officer, as he prepared to re-enter his gig, "that he will give you until tomorrow morning to make your decision. If you do not then surrender he will be compelled to bombard the town." As a strong force of Hondurans had in the mean time appeared on the land side of the city and were preparing to attack, Walker realized that his position had become untenable, so that night he and his men slipped silently out of the sleeping city and started down the coast with the intention of making their way overland to Nicaragua. When the British landed the next morning they were only just in time to prevent the sick and wounded whom Walker had been forced to leave behind him in his retreat from falling into the hands of the ferocious Hondurans. Learning of Walker's flight, Salmon immediately started down the coast on the *Icarus* in pursuit.

They overtook Walker at a little fishing village

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near the mouth of the Rio Negro, several boatloads of sailors and marines being sent up the river to take him. But the coast of Honduras is a good second to the Gold Coast in the deadliness of its climate, so that when the landing party reached the little cluster of wretched hovels where Walker and his men had taken refuge, they found the filibusters too far gone with fever to oppose them. To Captain Salmon's demand for an unconditional surrender, Walker, who was so weak that he could scarcely stand, inquired if he was surrendering to the English or to the Hondurans. Captain Salmon twice assured him distinctly that it was to the English, whereupon the filibusters, at Walker's orders, laid down their arms and were taken aboard the *Icarus*. No sooner had he arrived back at Trujillo, however, than Captain Salmon, breaking the word he had given as an officer and a gentleman, and in defiance of every law of humanity, turned his prisoners over to the Honduran authorities. Salmon, who was young and pompous and had a life-size opinion of himself and his position, interceded for all of the prisoners except Walker, and obtained their release, but he informed the filibuster chieftain that he would plead for him only on condition that he would ask his intercession as an American

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citizen. But Walker, imbittered by the treatment he had received at the hands of his own government and disdaining to turn to it for assistance in his adversity, answered proudly: "The President of Nicaragua is a citizen of Nicaragua," and turned his back upon the Englishman who had betrayed him.

He was tried by court martial on September 11, 1860, and after the barest formalities was sentenced to be shot at daybreak the next morning. The place selected for his execution was a strip of sandy beach, and to it the condemned man walked as coolly as though taking a morning stroll. Before him tramped a detachment of slovenly Honduran infantry, who, with their brown, wizened faces, their ill-fitting uniforms, and their jaunty caps, looked more like monkeys than men; behind him marched the firing-party, with weapons at the charge; beside him was a priest bearing a crucifix and murmuring the prayers for the dying. As the little procession came to a halt within the hollow square of soldiery, Walker waved away the handkerchief with which they would have blindfolded him, and, cool and straight and soldierly as though in command of his Phalanx, took his stand before the firing-party.

"I die a Roman Catholic," he said in Spanish

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in a voice clear and unafraid. "The war which I made upon you was wrong and I take this opportunity of asking your pardon. I die with resignation, though it would be a consolation for me to feel that my death is for the good of society." As he ceased speaking, the officer in command of the troops dropped the point of his sword, the levelled rifles of the firing-party spoke as one, and Walker fell. But, though every bullet entered his body, he still lived. So a sergeant stepped forward with a cocked revolver and blew out his brains. With that shot there passed the soul of a very brave and gallant gentleman who deserved from his country better treatment than he received.



**CITIES CAPTURED BY CONTRACT**



## CITIES CAPTURED BY CONTRACT

I HAVE known men who, from need of money or from love of adventure, have contracted to do all sorts of seemingly impossible things. Some conquered apparently unconquerable chasms by means of daring bridges; others built railways across waterless, yellow deserts, where experts had asserted that no railway could go; one contracted to find and raise a treasure galleon sunk three hundred years ago; another agreed to compose an opera in a week; while still another engaged to find a man who for two years had been lost in equatorial Africa. It took a New Englander, however, to sign a contract to capture walled and hostile cities, at a stipulated price per city, just as a Chicago meat-packer would contract to supply a government with beef at so much a pound.

The man who entered into this amazing agreement was baptized Frederick Townsend Ward, but bore at his death the adopted name of Hwa. Though born within biscuit-throw of Salem wharves he was by residence a citizen of the world,

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and by profession a soldier of fortune. Now the trouble with most soldiers of fortune is that they don't make good in the end. They are generally entertaining fellows, with vast stores of information on an amazing variety of subjects, wide acquaintanceships with personages whose names you see in the daily papers, and an intimate knowledge of the little-known places, but they rarely save any money, they seldom rise to high positions, and they usually end their checkered careers by being ingloriously arrested for breaking the neutrality laws, or by dying, picturesquely but quite uselessly, between a stone wall and a firing-party.

That Frederick Ward was a striking exception merely proves the soundness of my remarks. Though he was a soldier of fortune (he fought under at least six flags) he did make money, for he capitalized his remarkable military genius by signing a contract to capture rebellious cities, at seventy-five thousand dollars a city, and took a dozen of them, one after another; he rose to be an admiral-general of China, and a Mandarin of the Red Button, which was equivalent to being a Dewey, a Kitchener, and a Cromer rolled into one; and though he died when scarcely thirty, it was on the walls of a captured city, directing a victorious charge. Though the Manchu dynasty

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of China, to which he gave an additional half-century of existence, has fallen, the soldiers of the new republic continue to invoke his spirit as that of a god of battles, and the priests of Confucius still burn incense before his tomb.

The story of how this adventurous American youth recognized the splendid fighting material into which the Chinese were capable of being transformed; how he took that material and heated and hammered and tempered it into a serviceable weapon, and gave that weapon a keen cutting edge; how, with a force which never numbered more than six thousand men, he broke the backbone of a rebellion which turned China into a shambles; and how his battalions came to be known, in the annals of time, as the "Ever-Victorious Army," forms a chronicle of courage and thrilling incident the like of which can not be found in history. If the almost incredible exploits of Ward have escaped the notice of our historians, it is because, at the time they took place, Americans were too intent on the business of their own great slaughter-house to be interested in a similar performance going on, in much less workmanlike fashion, half the world away. Though British writers slightly allude to Ward as "an obscure Yankee adventurer," the officer who suc-

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ceeded him, General Charles George Gordon, merely completed the work which his predecessor had begun, and built his military reputation on the foundations which the American had laid. Though the name of Frederick Townsend Ward holds but little meaning for the vast majority of his countrymen, it is still a name to conjure with in that country which he saved from anarchy.

Though a youth in appearance and in years, Ward was a seasoned veteran long before he set out on his last campaign. Before he was five-and-twenty he had had enough experiences to satisfy a dozen ordinary men. Coming from New England seafaring stock, it was only to be expected that a passion for adventure should course through his veins. From the time he donned short trousers he dreamed of a cadetship at West Point, and a commission under his own flag. But it was destined that his military genius should profit another country than his own, and that he should fight and die under an alien banner. His father, a stern old merchant captain, held that there was no training for a boy like that to be had in the school of the sea, and so, when young Ward was scarce half-way through his teens, he was packed off aboard a sailing-vessel bound for the China seas. By the time he was twenty he held a first mate's

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warrant, and had paid for it with three long voyages. Joining Garibaldi's famous Foreign Legion, he saw service under that great soldier in the war between the Republic of the Rio Grande and Brazil. Afterward he helped the young Republic of Uruguay to defeat Manuel Rosas, the Argentine dictator. At the outbreak of the Crimean War he obtained a lieutenant's commission in a regiment of French zouaves, and followed the tricolor until the Treaty of Paris brought that bloody campaign to an end. Turning his steps toward Latin America again, he joined William Walker in his ill-fated Nicaraguan adventure, and after that leader's execution in Honduras he offered his sword and services to Juarez, and helped to win for him the presidency of Mexico. With the triumph of Juarez, peace settled for a time upon the western hemisphere, and Ward, finding no market for his military talents, was driven by financial necessities to take up the occupation of a ship-broker in New York City. But the shackles of trade soon proved intolerable to this man of action. He was like a race-horse harnessed to a milk-wagon. Though his talk was of cargoes and bottomry and tonnage, his thoughts were far away, on those distant seaboard of the world where history was in the making. At the begin-

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ning of 1859, the only country in the world where fighting on a large scale was going on was China, which was being devastated by the great Taiping Rebellion. In the spring of that year Ward, unable to longer resist the call to action which was forever sounding in his ears, turned the key in the door of his New York office, saddled his horse, and, unaccompanied, rode across the continent to San Francisco, where he booked a passage for Shanghai. It was no random adventure which he had undertaken. He had laid his plans carefully and knew exactly what he intended doing. Nor did the magnitude of his project dishearten him. He had set out to save an empire, and he intended to win fame and fortune in doing it.

The conditions which prevailed in China between 1850 and 1863 can be compared only to the French Reign of Terror, or to the rule of the Mahdi in the Sudan. About the time that the nineteenth century was approaching the half-way mark, a Chinese schoolmaster named Hung-siu-Tseuen, inflamed by the partially comprehended teachings of Christian missionaries, had inaugurated a propaganda to overthrow the Confucian religion, and incidentally the reigning dynasty. There speedily rallied to his banners all the floating scoundrelism of China. In 1852 the rebel hordes had moved



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into the province of Hunan, murdering, pillaging, and burning as they went; advanced down the Kiang River to the Yang-tse, down which they sailed, capturing and sacking the cities on its banks. Making Nanking his capital, the rebel leader assumed the title of Tien Wang, or "Heavenly King," and proclaimed the rule of the Ping Chao, or "Peace Dynasty," which, with the prefix Tai ("great") gave the rebellion its name, Taiping. Wang's great hordes of tatterdemalions, flushed with their unbroken series of successes, gradually overran the silk and tea districts, the richest in the empire, threatened Peking, and advanced almost to the gates of Shanghai, carrying death and destruction over fifteen of the eighteen provinces of China. Perhaps it will give a better idea of the magnitude of this rebellion when I add that reliable authorities estimate that it cost China *two billion five hundred million dollars, and twenty million human lives*. By the autumn of 1859 such of the imperial forces as remained loyal had been whipped to a standstill, and the European powers having interests in China had their work cut out to defend the treaty ports; the rebels were undisputed masters of all Central China; the rivers were literally choked with corpses, and the smoke of burning cities overhung the land. The atrocities com-

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mitted by order of the Taiping leader shocked even the dulled sensibilities of China. On one occasion, six thousand people, suspected of an intention to desert, were gathered in the public square of Nanking. A hundred executioners stood among the prisoners with bared swords, and, at a signal from the Wang, slashed off heads until their arms were weary, and blood stood inches deep in the gutters. Ward had indeed chosen a good market in which to sell his services.

Through an English friend in the Chinese service, Ward obtained an introduction to Wu, the Taotai of Shanghai, and to a millionaire merchant and mandarin named Tah Kee. The plan he proposed was as simple as it was daring. He offered to recruit a foreign legion, with which he would defend Shanghai, and at the same time attack such of the Taiping strongholds as were within striking distance, stipulating that for every city captured he was to receive seventy-five thousand dollars in gold, that his men were to have the first day's looting, and that each place taken should immediately be garrisoned by imperial troops, leaving his own force free for further operations. Wu on behalf of the government, and Tah Kee as the representative of the Shanghai merchants, promptly agreed to this proposal, and

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signed the contract. They had, indeed, everything to gain and nothing to lose. It was also arranged that Tah Kee should at the outset furnish the arms, ammunition, clothing, and commissary supplies necessary to equip the legion. These preliminaries once settled, Ward wasted no time in recruiting his force, for every day was bringing the Taipings nearer. A number of brave and experienced officers, for the most part soldiers of fortune like himself, hastened to offer him their services, General Edward Forester, an American, being appointed second in command. The rank and file of the legion was recruited from the scum and offscourings of the East, Malay pirates, Burmese dacoits, Tartar brigands, and desperadoes, adventurers, and fugitives from justice from every corner of the farther East being attracted by the high rate of pay, which in view of the hazardous nature of the service, was fixed at one hundred dollars a month for enlisted men, and proportionately more for officers. The non-commissioned officers, who were counted upon to stiffen the ranks of the Orientals, were for the most part veterans of continental armies, and could be relied upon to fight as long as stock and barrel held together. The officers carried swords and Colt's revolvers, the latter proving terribly effective in the hand-to-

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hand fighting which Ward made the rule; while the men were armed with Sharp's repeating carbines and the vicious Malay *kris*. Everything considered, I doubt if a more formidable aggregation of ruffians ever took the field. Ward placed his men under a discipline which made that of the German army appear like a kindergarten; taught them the tactics he had learned under Garibaldi, Walker, and Juarez; and finally, when they were as keen as razors and as tough as rawhide, he entered them in battle on a most astonished foe.

The first city Ward selected for capture was Sunkiang, on the banks of the Wusung River, some twenty-five miles above Shanghai. In choosing this particular place as his first point of attack, Ward showed himself a diplomatist as well as a soldier, for it was one of the seven sacred cities of China, and to it had been wont to come thousands of pilgrims from the most distant provinces, to prostrate themselves in the temple of Confucius, the oldest and most revered shrine in the empire. Its capture by the Taipings and their desecration of its altars had sent a thrill of horror through the imperialists, such as was not even caused by the loss of the great metropolis of Nanking.

Ward, who appreciated the necessity of winning

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the recognition and confidence of the higher authorities, well knew that the regaining of this sacred city would endear him to the religious heart of China as nothing else could do. But Sunkiang, with its walls twenty feet high and five miles in circumference, and with a garrison of five thousand fanatics to defend those walls, was no easy nut to crack even for a powerful force well supplied with artillery. The idea of its being taken by Ward and his five hundred desperadoes was preposterous, unthinkable, absurd. He first tried the weapon he had so painstakingly forged on a July morning, in 1860. Just as his European critics in Shanghai had prophesied, the attack on Sunkiang proved the most dismal of failures. His stealthy approach being discovered by the Taipings, he was greeted with such a withering fire upon reaching the walls that, being without supports, and perceiving the hopelessness of the situation, he ordered his buglers to sound the retreat.

But Ward was one of those rare men to whom discouragements and disasters are but incidents, annoying but not disheartening, in the day's work. He spent a fortnight in strengthening the weakened *morale* of his force, and then he tried again, making his onset with the suddenness and fury of a tiger's spring just at break of day.

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Slipping like ghosts through the grayness of the dawn, Ward and his men stole across the surrounding rice-fields, and were almost under the city walls before the Taiping sentries discovered their approach. As the first rifle cracked, Ward and one of his lieutenants raced ahead with bags of powder, placed them beneath the main gate of the city, and lighted the fuse. Like an echo of the ensuing explosion rose the shrill yell of the legionaries, who dashed forward like sprinters in a race. Instead of the gates being blown to pieces as they had expected, they found that they had been forced apart only enough for one man to pass at a time—and on the other side of that door of death five thousand rebels waited eagerly for the first of the attackers to appear. “Come on, boys!” roared Ward, his voice rising above the crash of the musketry, “We’re going in!” and plunged through the narrow opening, a revolver in each hand. Hard on his heels crowded his legionaries. Though they were going to what was almost certain death, such was the magnetism of their leader that not a man hung back, not a man faltered. Before half a dozen men were through they were attacked by hundreds, but, so deadly was the fire they poured in with their repeaters, they were able to hold off the defenders until the



“Come on, boys!” shouted Ward. “We’re going in!” and plunged through the narrow opening, a revolver in each hand.





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whole attacking force was within the gate. Then began one of the most desperate and unequal fights in history. The key to the city was the howitzer battery, which was stationed on the top of the massive main gate, forty feet above. Up the narrow ramps the legionaries fought their way, five hundred against five thousand, hacking, stabbing, firing, at such close range that their rifles set fire to their opponents' clothing, driving their bayonets into the human wall before them as a field-hand pitchforks hay. Wherever there was space for a man to plant his feet or swing his sword, there a Taiping was to be found. The passageway was choked with them, but they sullenly gave way before the frenzy of Ward's attack as a hillside slowly disintegrates before the stream from a hydraulic nozzle. Ward was wounded, and his men were falling about him by dozens, but those that were left, mad with the lust of battle, fought on, until with a final surge and cheer they reached the top, and the position which commanded the city was in their hands. Then the Taipings broke and fled, some to be overtaken and slaughtered by the legionaries, others throwing themselves into the streets below. Bayoneting the rebel gunners, the howitzers were turned upon the city, raking the streets,

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sweeping the crowded walls and house-tops, and leaving heaps of dead and dying where Taiping regiments had stood before.

For four-and-twenty hours Ward and the exhausted survivors of his legion, without food and without water, held the gate in the face of the most desperate efforts to retake it. Then the Chinese reinforcements for which he had asked tardily arrived, and Sunkiung was an Imperial city again. The American had taken the first trick in the great game he was playing. It was at fearful cost, however, for of the five hundred men who followed him into action, but one hundred and twenty-eight remained alive, and of these only twenty-seven were without wounds. In other words, the casualties amounted to *more than ninety-four per cent of the entire force*. Ward had ridden out of Shanghai a despised adventurer to whom the foreign officers refused to speak. He returned to that city a hero and a power in China. The priesthood acclaimed him as the saviour of the sacred city; the emperor made him a Mandarin of the Red Button; the merchants of Shanghai voiced their relief by adding a splendid estate to the promised reward of seventy-five thousand dollars. His reputation would have been secure if he had never fought another battle.

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Leaving Sunki-ang heavily garrisoned by imperial troops, Ward withdrew to Shanghai for the purpose of recruiting his shattered forces. Such a glamour of romance now surrounded the legion that Ward was fairly besieged by European as well as Oriental volunteers. Shortly after the capture of Sunki-ang, Ward had occasion to visit Shanghai with reference to the care of his wounded. While riding through the streets of the city he was arrested by a British patrol, and despite his protestations that he was an officer in the imperial service, was hustled aboard the flag-ship of Admiral Sir James Hope, which lay in the harbor, and was placed in close confinement. In reply to his inquiries he was told that he was to be tried for recruiting British man-o'-war's-men for service in his legion. Though the arrest was high-handed and unjustified, there seemed no immediate prospect of release, for the American consul-general refused to interfere on the ground that Ward, by taking service under the Chinese government, had forfeited his right to American protection; the imperial authorities were powerless to take any action; while the British were notoriously fearful of the dangerous ascendancy which this American might gain if his successful career was permitted to continue. The only hope for Ward

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—and for China—lay in his escape. A friend perfected a plan of flight. While visiting Ward, who was confined in an outside cabin of the flag-ship, with a marine constantly on guard at the door, he synchronized his watch with that of the cabin clock, and whispered to the prisoner that he would be in a sampan under his cabin window at precisely two o'clock in the morning. Taking off his coat and shoes that he might be unhampered in the water, Ward sat on the edge of his berth with his eyes on the face of the clock. Just as the minute-hand touched the figure II, Ward made a dash for the window and sprang head-foremost through the sash, for the windows of the old fashioned men-of-war were much larger than the ports of modern battle-ships. He had hardly touched the water before he was pulled aboard a sampan, which disappeared in the darkness long before the flag-ship's boats could be manned and lowered. This daring exploit enormously increased Ward's prestige among both Chinese and Europeans, with whom the British, as a result of their insolent and overbearing attitude, were intensely unpopular. Some days later Admiral Hope sent a message to Ward requesting an interview, and, upon Ward assuring him that he would no longer recruit his ranks from the British navy,

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the old sea fighter became his strong partisan and friend.

With his ranks once more repleted, Ward made preparations for a second venture. This time it was the city of Sing-po toward which he turned; but the Taipings, getting wind of his intentions, secretly threw an overwhelming force into the place under a renegade Englishman named Savage. Ward was without artillery with which to breach the walls, and, after several desperate assaults, in leading which he was severely wounded, he was forced to retire. Ten days later, regardless of his wounds, he tried again, but this time he was taken in the rear by a Taiping army of twenty thousand men, his little force being completely surrounded. So certain was the rebel leader that the famous general was within his grasp, that he consulted with his officers as to what methods of torture they should use upon him. But he was a trifle premature, for Ward struck the Taiping cordon at its weakest point, fought his way through, and reached Shanghai with a loss of only one hundred men. His secret agents bringing him word that the powerful force from which he had just escaped was to be used in the recapture of Sunkiang, Ward, by making night marches, slipped unperceived into that city. When the Taipings at-

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tempted to carry it by storm a few days later, instead of meeting with the half-hearted resistance which they had grown to expect from Chinese garrisons, they were astounded to see the helmeted figure of the dreaded American upon the walls, and were greeted with a blast of rifle fire which swept away their leading columns and crumpled up their army as effectually as though it had encountered an earthquake.

Dangerously weakened by half a dozen wounds, Ward was reluctantly compelled to go to Paris in the fall of 1860 for surgical attention. Back at Shanghai again at the beginning of the following summer, he found that the Taipings, emboldened by his absence, were flaunting their banner within sight of the city walls. From end to end of the empire there existed an unparalleled reign of terror, the rebels now having grown so strong that they demanded the recognition of the European powers. Ward, meanwhile, had become convinced that the true solution of the problem lay in raising an army of natives, rather than foreigners, for not only was the supply of Chinese unlimited, but his experience had shown him that there was splendid fighting material in them if they were properly drilled and led. When he asked permission of the imperial government to

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raise and drill a Chinese force, therefore, it was gladly granted.

An opportunity to put his theories regarding the fighting capabilities of the Chinese to a test soon came. Learning that a force of rebels, ten thousand strong, was advancing in the direction of Shanghai, Ward sallied forth from his headquarters at Sunkiang with two thousand five hundred men, struck the Taiping army, curled it up like a withered leaf, and drove it a dozen miles into the interior. Pressing on, he captured the city of Quan-fu-ling, which the rebels had garrisoned and fortified, and with it several hundred junks loaded with supplies. Throughout these actions his Chinese displayed all the steadiness and courage of European veterans. That he showed sound judgment in pinning his faith to natives is best proved by the fact that from that time on he never met with a reverse. His motto was "Cold steel," and his tactics would have delighted the old-time sea fighters, for, appreciating the fact that few Oriental troops are capable of remaining steady under a galling long-range fire, he invariably threw his men against the enemy in an overwhelming charge, and finished the business at close quarters with the bayonet.

Moving up from Sunkiang with a thousand of

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his men, Ward joined a combined force of French and British bluejackets, who had with them a light howitzer battery, in an attack on Kaschiaou, just opposite Shanghai, which was the city's main source of supplies, and which the rebels had seized and fortified. Using the contingent from the warships as a reserve, Ward and his Chinamen did the work alone, carrying the stockades by storm and capturing two thousand rebels, as a result of which the enemy fell back from the neighborhood of Shanghai. So strongly impressed were the British officers with the behavior of Ward's soldiery that Sir James Mitchel, the commander-in-chief on the China station, strongly urged that the task of suppressing the rebellion be placed in the American's hands, and that he be empowered to raise his force to ten thousand men. A few weeks later Ward received an imperial rescript acknowledging his great services to China, and appointing him an admiral-general of the empire, the highest rank that the emperor could bestow. With this came the authority to recruit his force to six thousand men, and its baptism, by imperial order, with the sonorous and thrilling title of *Chun Chen Chun*, or the Ever-Victorious Army.

As the barometer of Ward's fortunes steadily rose, that of his native country began to fall,



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the dark cloud of secession hanging threateningly over the land. It has been said of Ward that he denationalized himself by marrying a Chinese wife and adopting a Chinese name, but there is no doubt that it was only his stern sense of duty which kept him at the task he had undertaken in China when the guns of Sumter boomed out the beginning of the Civil War. He immediately sent a contribution of ten thousand dollars to the Union war fund, however, with a message that his services were at the disposal of the North whenever they were required. At the time of the *Trent* affair, when war between England and the United States was momentarily expected, and the British in China had laid plans to seize American shipping and other property in the treaty ports, Ward effected a secret organization of American sympathizers and prepared to surprise and capture every British war-ship and merchant vessel in Chinese waters. In view of his success in equally daring exploits, there is good reason to believe that he would have accomplished even so startling a *coup* as this.

While recruiting his army to its newly authorized strength, Ward did not give the Taipings a moment's rest. He kept several flying columns constantly in the field, attacking the rebels at

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every opportunity, cutting up their outposts, harrying their pickets, breaking their lines of communication, and demoralizing them generally. One day Ward would be reported as operating in the south, and the Wang would draw a momentary breath of relief, but the next night, without the slightest warning, he would suddenly fall upon a city a hundred miles to the northward and carry it by storm. By such aggressive tactics as these Ward struck fear to the heart of the Taiping leader, who saw the despotism he had built up crumbling about him before the American's smashing blows. It was said, indeed, that the mere sight of Ward's white helmet in the van of a storming party was more effective than a brigade of infantry. With a thousand men of his own corps and six hundred royal marines he attacked and captured Tsee-dong, a walled city of considerable strength, and cleared the rebels from the surrounding region as though with a fine-tooth comb. The town of Wong-kadza was in the possession of the Taipings, and Ward decided to capture it. General Staveley, who had succeeded Sir James Mitchel in command of the British forces, offered to co-operate with him. It was agreed that they should rendezvous outside the town. Ward reached there first with six hundred of his men.

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Without waiting for the British to come up, he ordered his bugles to sound the charge, and after a quarter of an hour of desperate fighting he carried the stockade, and the rebels broke and ran, Ward's men killing more of them in the pursuit than they themselves numbered. When General Staveley arrived a few hours later he was chagrined to see the imperial standard flying over the city and to find that the impetuous American had done the work and reaped the glory. The allied forces now pressed on to the Taiping stronghold of Tai-poo, which was held by a strong and well-armed garrison. While the British engaged the attention of the rebels in front with a fierce artillery fire, Ward and his Chinamen made a détour to the rear of the city, and were at and over the walls almost before the garrison realized what had happened.

The Ever-Victorious Army now numbered nearly six thousand men. It was well drilled and under an iron discipline; it was fairly well armed; it was magnificently officered; it was emboldened with repeated successes. The man who was the maker and master of such a force might well go a long way. That Ward dreamed of eventually making himself dictator of China there can be but little doubt. Louis Napoleon, remember,

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climbed to a throne on the bayonets of his soldiers. By this time the American soldier of fortune had become by long odds the most popular figure in the empire; the army was with him to a man; he possessed the confidence of the great mandarins and merchant princes; and he had to his credit an almost unparalleled succession of victories. Dictator of the East! What American ever had a more ambitious dream and was within such measurable distance of realizing it? It is no exaggeration to say that, had Ward lived, the whole history of the Orient would have been changed, and China, rather than Japan, would doubtless have held the balance of power in the Farther East.

In April, 1862, Ward, the Viceroy Lieh, and the French and British commanders held a council of war in Shanghai. Ward suggested a plan of campaign designed to break the Taiping power in that part of China for good and all. Briefly put, his scheme was to capture a semicircle of cities within a radius of fifty miles of Shanghai and the coast. This would result in the rebels being held within their own lines by a cordon of bayonets, and, as they had utterly devastated the regions they had overrun, would mean starvation for them. Thus cut off from the seaboard, Ward

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argued, they would be unable to obtain ammunition and supplies, and the rebellion would soon wither. The series of operations was carried out as planned, Ward's corps being reinforced by three thousand French and British. It ended in the capture, in rapid succession, of the cities of Kah-ding, Sing-po, Najaor, and Tsaolin. In every case Ward insisted on being given the post of honor; he and his Chinamen, who fought with an appalling disregard for life, carrying the defences at the bayonet's point, while his European allies covered his advance with artillery fire and supported his whirlwind attacks. Leaving garrisons barely large enough to hold the captured cities, he pushed on by forced marches to Ning-po, which was a large and strongly fortified city. Twice his storming parties were driven back. The third time the men, exhausted by the continuous fighting in which they had been engaged and the long marches they had been called upon to perform, momentarily faltered in the face of the terrible fire which greeted them. Instantly Ward ordered the recall sounded, formed them into line within easy rifle-range of the city walls, and calmly put them through the manual of arms with as much precision as though they were on parade, while a storm of bullets whistled round them, and men

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were momentarily dropping in the ranks. Then, his men once more in hand, the bugles screamed the charge and the yellow line roared on to victory.

Ward gave his last order to advance—he had forgotten how to give any other—on September 21, 1862. With a regiment of his men he was about to attack Tse-Ki, a small fortified coast town a few miles from Ning-po. With his habitual contempt for danger he was standing with General Forester, his chief of staff, well in advance of his men, inspecting the position through his field-glasses. Suddenly he clapped his hand to his breast. "I've been hit, Ed!" he exclaimed, and fell forward into the arms of his friend. Very tenderly his devoted yellow men carried him aboard the British war-ship *Hardy*, which was lying in the harbor, but the naval surgeons shook their heads when an examination showed that the bullet had passed through his lungs. "Don't mind me," whispered Ward. "Take the city." So Forester, heavy at heart, ordered forward the storming parties. That night the great captain died. The last sound he heard was his Chinamen's shrill yell of triumph.

With extraordinary solemnity the dead soldier was laid to rest in the temple of Confucius in Sun-kiang, the most sacred shrine in China and the

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very spot where he had established his headquarters after his first great victory. His body, which was followed to the grave by imperial viceroys, European admirals, generals, and consuls, and Chinese mandarins, was borne between the silent lines of his Ever-Victorious Army. By order of the emperor his name was placed in the pantheon of the gods. Temples to commemorate his victories were built at Sing-po and Ning-po, and a magnificent mausoleum was erected in his honor in Sunkiang. In it the yellow priests of Confucius still burn incense before his tomb. In all his history there can be found no hint of dishonor, no trace of shame. He was a great soldier and a very gallant gentleman, but he has been forgotten by his own people. To paraphrase the lines of Matthew Arnold:

“Far hence he lies,  
Near some lone Chinese town,  
And on his grave, with shining eyes,  
The Eastern stars look down.”







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