

THE
WARS OF THE GULLS;
AN
HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

IN THREE CHAPTERS.

CHAP. I. *Shewing how, and why, and with whom
the Gulls went to war.*

CHAP. II. *Shewing how the Gulls make the deep to
boil like a pot.*

CHAP. III. *Shewing how a certain doughty Gene-
ral of the Gulls goes forth to play the game of
HULL-GULL in Upper Canada.*

“ And from the pinnacle of glory,
“ Falls headlong into purgatory.”

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED AT THE DRAMATIC REPOSITORY,
Shakespeare Gallery.

1812.

K. G. Phelps

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THE
WARS OF THE GULLS.

CHAPTER I.

Shewing how, and why, and with whom the Gulls went to war.

YE that have listened with astonishment to the ancient battles in Grecian song of the Frogs and Mice, and who have dilated your jaws with consternation at the red slaughter of the Pigmies and the Cranes; you are invited once more to expand your mouths and once more to erect your ears at the recital of deeds unexampled in history, unparalleled in fiction, unattempted in prose or rhyme, and utterly unknown, unseen and unheard of—save in the *Wars of the Gulls*.

It was on a foggy afternoon, such as Virginians are accustomed to counteract with a *mint julep*, and such as cloudy heads

find congenial to cogitation; that the Sage of Montpelier, the commander in chief of the armies of the Gulls, retired to his lolling-chair to ponder on the destinies of the nation. The declaration of war, by virtue of which the whole nation of Gulls were to pounce *unguibus et rostro* upon the unprotected heads of the *Bulls*, their lawfully appointed enemies, was in his hand. A map of British America was under his feet, blotted and defaced from carving; but accurately divided as if Ellicot had drawn the lines from celestial observation. The margins and spaces usually blank because unexplored, were copiously filled with the names of their future dignitaries, the favourites of their puissant commander. Here was a viceroy of Labrador, and there was a collector of customs on Mc Kenzie's River. A victorious general was military governor over the fragments of Quebec, while an uncouth looking colonel was plenipo. to the Dog-ribbed Indians. "Who," said the chief of the Gulls, as he

cast his eye over his dependancies, "who can like me put his thumb on a whole continent at once? What potentate so colossal that in bestriding his empire, he can cool one toe upon the north pole, while he warms the other at the southernmost cape in Florida? These are the true limits of my dominions; yes, I am to *have Canada*, or Felix Grundy is no prophet, and William Widgery is an unprincipled deceiver. Take Canada, say they, before the ice breaks up, and as for the rest it may be taken at any time for the ice never breaks up. Plant but a standard in Canada and the subjects of oppression will rush by thousands to receive the oath of allegiance, and to become incorporated with the great nation of the Gulls. A few weeks more and my myrmidons shall be scouring the wilderness and beating the bushes, from Kingston to lake Winnipeg. No need of more recruits, for the renegadoes of the fur trade, the scape-goats of British oppression, shall come over in swarms to join the invincible

standard, and daily add new Gulls to the conquering legion. No need of provisions, for the lakes have fish, and the woods are teeming with the delicious flesh of bears and prairie dogs. No need of clothing, for the capture of every trading hut will furnish furs for a regiment, and the spoils of the forest will be a noble substitute for ragged shirts and antedeluvian breeches. No need of pay, for the warlike and successful troops shall receive their fame in regular installments, and coin their wages in cents at the *embouchure* of Coppermine river. Meanwhile the happy, the enlightened nation of the Gulls shall squat under their vines and fig trees and snuff up in every gale the prowess of their brethren. No odious accumulation of taxes shall at present cast a cloud on the brilliant prospect of my second election. No building of ships and fortifications shall belie the established character of a frugal and penurious administration. The sovereign people shall be set at rest on the ground of expense, and

while a weekly bulletin announces the capture of a swamp or the fall of a log-house, they shall exult in the glorious fortune which made them Gulls, and wonder how a government can go to war so cheap !”

Such were the plans and ponderings which the recent declaration of war had lighted up within the cranium of the head of the nation. But it was not to so *narrow a sphere* that the effects of this portentous declaration were confined. At one and the same moment it was spreading uproar throughout the continent, and wafting dismay and consternation across the Atlantic. In Great Britain its consequences were almost simultaneous with its creation. Many weeks before the news of it could reach that country, before it could even be lisped by any imprudent functionary in France, its overwhelming effects began to burst forth in the fast anchored isle on every side. *Out* went the ministry *en masse*, as if they had been dislodged from their seats by a clap of the “red artillery of heaven.” The chan-

cellor of the exchequer was put to death without time to say his neck verse, and the Prince Regent himself, with his foot on the throne of his fathers, was about to suffer the same fate, had he not luckily bethought himself of the great example of Governor Gerry of Massachusetts, and sought instantaneous refuge behind a proclamation. Even the crazy old king, insulated from the world and worn out as he was both in body and mind, was observed on a sudden to become remarkably unruly among his nurses, and had a paroxysm of cholic the subsequent morning.

CHAPTER II.

*Shewing how the Gulls make the deep to
boil like a pot.*

IN the harbour of New York lay at anchor Commodore John Rogers, having the redoubtable navy of the Gulls under his command. This is not the John Rogers who suffered martyrdom in popery times at Smithfield, and was followed to the stake by a squadron of children, respecting the number of whom it is problematical whether they were *nine* or *ten*. The worthy Commodore was never like to experience any difficulty in numbering his squadron, for it was a fixed maxim with the Gulls that no ships at all were better than a cumbersome navy. Nevertheless as they had once been an *aquatic* tribe and were generally ranked among *water fowls*, it was thought expedient to make one more experiment to ascertain whether they had lost

by long disuse the art of swimming. Accordingly the gallant naval armament weighed anchor and stretched out of the harbour, while the necks of the Gulls stretched after them from every shore. Scarcely had the squadron passed through the Narrows and commenced their track upon the ocean, leaving the highlands of Neversink beneath the surface of the deep; when a tremendous and long continued firing which seemed to render the very rocks and shores unsafe within the wind of its commotion, was heard off various points of the coast of Long Island. One frigate, two frigates, three frigates; some whole and some dismasted, were seen at different times towing each other into the harbour of New York.* This proved a glorious triumph for the Gulls, abating a slight mistake of place, as the prizes arrived not at New York but at one of the harbours in the Moon, where they were regularly entered by Mr. Jefferson's collector.

* See the Gull papers of the time.

Now there sailed in the squadron of the Commodore, a small but venomous sloop of war yeapt the Hornet. This vessel having strayed perchance from the fleet, had the luck to fall in with a large frigate some dozen times its own magnitude, called the Belvidere, with whom she "*had a slight brush.*" This bully frigate finding it impossible to float before the buzzing and brushing of the Hornet, was glad to crowd all sail and make the best of her escape from so troublesome a pursuer. Tell it not in Halifax, said the Gull papers, publish it not in the streets of London, that a British frigate ran away from an American sloop of war. This "*brush*" however was not without serious consequences, for it broke the Commodore's leg, who was at that time in some part of the same ocean, and caused two midshipmen and half a dozen sailors to die for grief; some having broken hearts, and the rest broken heads. Albeit, this was a glorious triumph for the Gulls.

The Jamaica fleet consisting of 150 sail

of richly laden merchantmen, was the next fruit of this successful expedition. Out of the number of this fleet one hundred and one sail, thirty-one sail, twenty-one sail were successively captured,* making in all 153 sail. The country would have overflowed with West India goods, enough to last even to the end of the war, had not these merchantmen unluckily been ordered for the Moon, instead of being sent into New York. Nevertheless, though the Gulls got no rum and molasses, yet they had *triumph* in abundance.

Meanwhile this great and dignified people were not unmindful of the earnest and repeated calls of their clamorous papers to scour the ocean with privateers. In a short time the Argus opened its hundred eyes and the Wily Reynard was racking his brains for stratagems of plunder; the Marengo prepared to triumph in the cause of France, and Madison and Jefferson and Bona. having each a gun in his tail and

* Vide Gull papers.

fifty tatterdemalions armed with tomahawks and speaking trumpets, commenced an indiscriminate havoc among vessels which could not fight, of all kindreds, and nations, and tongues. The ocean became a mere theatre of indiscriminate depredation, and the moonlight was obscured by the cloud of prizes daily arriving. The ghost of Robert Kidd awoke from the slumber of ages, where he had been composed to rest by the soporific influence of the gallows; he first rubbed his eyes, yawned, and asked what year of our Lord it was; then clearing his pipes he struck up the old fashioned ditty "When I sailed, when I sailed," and the whole posse comitatus of long winded privateersmen bellowed lustily to the chorus.

It ill beseems the impartial chronicler of events to rake up invidious distinctions out of a mingled chaos of merit, prowess and invincibility. Had each privateersman a dozen epics appropriated to his special honour, they would fall infinitely short of the

glory due to his valorous atchievements. But we should be mere logs of wood in point of stupidity, and deserve everlasting oblivion for our much belaboured history, did we omit to signalize one of these gallant barks, which far outstripped the rest in danger and in triumph, to wit, the vessel *that took the Plumper*.

In Boston harbour lay the empress Catharine of Russia, who having been for some time in the keeping of his Ex-honour the cidevant Lieut. Governor of that state; on a sudden bethought herself to return as a letter of marque, in a peaceable manner, to her own Muscovian dominions. It was not to be expected that an amiable and unprotected female, while pursuing her way quietly on the ocean and showing hostility to no one save the little fishes, should have experienced violence or rudeness from any ill bred traveller of the deep. So it chanced, however, that an unmannerly boor of the family of Bulls, named Plumper, happening to fall in with the royal beauty,

had the impudence to exhibit some airs of familiarity, not to be endured by one of her courtly birth and rank. The presumptuous gallant was not aware that he was taking freedoms with the real Semiramis of the North, until an astonishing box in the ear from the redoubtable fist of her highness *plumped* him headlong into Marblehead in a state of half decomposition, leaving an awful lesson to all audacious clowns and aspiring boobies, that

“No course so wild or so infeasible,

“As that of force to win a Jezebel.”

It is with grief that we must here acknowledge that a melancholy and sombre cloud hangs over the brilliancy of the remainder of this splendid affair. In the course of a few days following, even while the Marblehead *Gulls were triumphing* in the expectation of an unprecedented prize, the appalling news arrived that the Catharine was in odious thralldom at Halifax, striving to dry her tears with the faint hope of deliverance from some Canadian knight

errant! Through what untoward juggle of the destines so cruel an event could have happened is utterly unknown. The only ray of light hitherto shed on this obscure subject by the oracles of the Gulls is, that it was somehow or other owing to *the d—d tory federalists*.

About these times a very brilliant and unexpected event created great astonishment among the Gulls. A certain frigate called the Constitution, which the Gulls had always hated for her name, and which they had loaded with curses on the very day of her launch; put to sea in quest of adventures. She had the good fortune in a short time to fall in with an enemy of some importance, and after a short but energetic battle, consigned him to the custody of David Jones, and came home to tell the news. The Gulls, at this intelligence, looked aghast at each other, and earnestly inquired if there was *no catch*. Finding that, unlike their customary news, this was a clear matter of fact, they fell to loggerheads as to

the mode of communicating it to the public. One thought it best to give the simple statement without comment, while another* insisted on misstating, by one half, the forces of the ships, alleging, that where there was no *lie*, there was no genuine *triumph for the Gulls*.

* Vide Aurora.

CHAPTER III.

*Shewing how a certain doughty General of
the Gulls goes forth to play the game of
HULL-GULL in Upper Canada,*

“ And from the pinnacle of glory,
“ Falls headlong into purgatory.”

WHILE these portentous and unprecedented events were transacting in various regions of the terraqueous globe, and alarming the human race at the probable return of chaos, or at least of the iron age; a cabinet council of all the nobles and dignitaries of the Gulls, was summoned in the capitol of their august commander, at the seat of government. Never since the Miltonian synod was such a council convoked; never was witnessed such an assemblage of faces, grave with unutterable conceptions; of heads distended even to bursting with the volume of their immeasurable projects; never were heard such torrents of

overpowering rhetoric, and such flashings of intuitive and supernatural sapience, as burst forth from every elbow chair, when the great Gull of the nation, the grand Mo-gull of his idolaters, brought out for their consideration the solemn and important question—How is Canada to be taken?

A hurricane of schemes and projects, the least of which would for wisdom have distanced the son of Laertes, were ushered on the carpet and backed by a volley of unanswerable arguments. One maintained that Canada should be carried by instantaneous assault, another that it should be circumvented by stratagem. One was for shutting up the god of war in the bowels of a wooden horse and sending him thus *securely mounted* into the centre of Quebec; another was for drying up the St. Lawrence as Cyrus dried up the Euphrates when he took Babylon. One more cruel than the rest would have given the signal to Widgery to make his descent up-

on the frontier territory at once, while others thought it more prudent to wait for the arrival of one of Bonaparte's generals. Many were for equipping a fleet of gun boats and transports loaded with Kentucky volunteers, who were to be landed at the mouth of Columbia river, and after a forced march across the rocky mountains were to attack the enemy at a quarter where they were least expected. All these sage opinions however were obliged to give way, when the great Mo-gul himself with a look of gravity and consequence never to be imitated, assured the assembly, that on the maturest consideration, he was resolved to take Canada *by Proclamation*. "By Proclamation," said he, "my illustrious predecessor defended this extensive region during a long and warlike reign of eight years, and brought the belligerent powers of Europe to his feet. By Proclamation I have commenced this great and perilous war, and by Proclamation I will carry vic-

tory into the very chimney corners of the enemy !”

A general grin of approbation gave proof incontestible that the weighty sentence of the chief had carried conviction home to every stomach. The whole cabinet was resolved into a proclaiming committee, and after a session of six weeks, with no other assistance than a file of the *Moniteur*, that stupendous Proclamation was engendered, which was to carry jeopardy and dismay from fort Churchill to Halifax. It was for sometime debated whether the Proclamation should be sent alone, or attended by an escort; but at length it was determined that just for form's sake, a regiment or two under the command of a valiant general, well known on the borders of Canada, should attend the mammoth production into that country; and that in case of any unforeseen difficulty, they should call for advice and direction upon their trusty cidevant cabineteer Barnabas Bidwell, and other confidential friends of the great Mogul, resident in that country.

Every one now admired the deep policy of the great Mo-gul, who, a long time previous to the invasion of Canada, had suffered his trusty associates Bidwell, Gannett, and others, to make a generous sacrifice of their reputation at home, that they might qualify themselves to reside with better grace in the country of their enemies, and to make gradual preparation for the reception of the victorious Proclamation, by teaching the illiterate natives how to read it, when it should arrive.

In the summer of 1812, this gallant Proclamation set out from Washington and without any material accident arrived at Detroit. Immediate preparations were made for a descent upon the enemy's country, and on the 12th of July the general and his Proclamation attended by the Tippecanoe boys, the Ohio militia, the Michigan raccoon catchers and a band of music, were all disembogued upon the opposite shore. It is here impossible to describe the alarm and trepidation and uproar which

spread among the astonished natives, as this terrific phalanx advanced toward their devoted settlements ;

“The dogs did bark, the children screamed,
“Up flew the windows all
“And every soul cried well a day !
“As loud as they could bawl.”

The women fled in crowds from the potent general, notwithstanding his assurances that he came there “to find enemies, not to *make* them.”

So great and so universal was the consternation that in a short time the whole settlement was evacuated, and the victorious general took quiet possession of a garrison of dogs, cats and spiders. The flag of the Gulls was spliced to an old pine stump and the conquering army sat down to consume their bread and cheese in the very heart of the “land debateable.” The Proclamation was now put in complete repair and a contract was made to have it transported with its appendages to fort Malden. It was apprehended that the gar-

ison of that fortress might discover some aversion to the great state engine of their enemies, and therefore various advanced parties were sent to reconnoitre the intermediate ground, to remove any obstacles in the way, and to get every thing in readiness for the immediate and forcible occupation of the fort.

It is an unalienable prerogative of him who writes histories to pass judgment on the events which he describes, and to acquaint the ignorant public, not only how things have been, but also how they should have been. Many a disastrous campaign would have been brilliantly successful had it been conducted by the historian instead of the general; and many an empire owes its birth or decay to the trivial circumstance that it was not coeval with a hawk eyed critic or antiquarian. The author of the present narrative can discern with half an eye that the invasion of Canada was not conducted with that accuracy and discretion which has usually marked the move-

ments of the Gulls. He is of opinion that an instantaneous attack should have been made upon the fort, and that the Proclamation should have been tumbled in headlong among the petrified garrison, before they could recover from the surprize of the onset. But the unlucky destinies had ordered it otherwise, and many precious days and nights were wasted in achievements, which although full of glory to the actors in them; contributed nothing to the grand object of the expedition. Some have foolishly asserted that their delay was owing to the want of gun carriages, provisions and ammunition; but others more acquainted with cabinet mysteries say that their instructions forbade them to act until they could effect cooperation with Barnabas Bidwell, in such a manner as to attack the garrison on one side, while Barnabas marched up his school to the assault on the other. However wise this scheme might have been, it certainly procrastinated the capture of the Canadian fort.

Meanwhile the Gulls who remained quietly roosting at home, were not to be baulked of their *triumph*. Although Fort Malden was not captured in reality, yet in the newspapers it was taken a thousand times. The whole genus clapped their sides in exultation and croaked out "Glory, Glory to the heroes of Tippecanoe!" A village of log houses in the state of Ohio was brilliantly illuminated with pine torches, and the only entire suit of clothes the town could boast was sacrificed to the laudable ambition of burning king George in effigy. In short all those Gulls who were remote from the scene of hostility puffed up their sides, looked big and terrible, and assailed the enemy at a distance with a shower of reproaches and war resolutions.

At the same time the army, although Fort Malden had not yet been prostrated before their terrific *looks*, did not remain inactive. If episodes were a part of the plan of this history, the reader would not fail to be astonished, with such accounts of desperate

deeds done by individuals, or by small detachments from the army, as would make each particular hair to stand erect on his head, and would elicit his benedictions upon the stars for not making him a Canadian. It would then be known how one of the raccoon catchers, after being tumbled from his horse, run down an Indian in a fair chase and left him stretched upon the ground, a scalpless warning to his tawny brethren to beware how they burnt their fingers in this war of extermination. It would then be seen how an army of eight hundred sheep capitulated to a force of one half their number, and how the victors returned in triumph loaded with trophies, having each man a sheep on his back. It would then be seen how various detachments of the grand army penetrated far into the woods, even beyond the shelter of the Proclamation; and there bravely challenged the enemy to the combat, but finding that nothing appeared to oppose them except the trees, they turned about and

marched back without the loss of a man. It would then be seen how certain of the militia displayed an heroic contempt of death, which would have done honour to veterans, by declaring, as they ran away, that "they had rather be killed by their officers than by those d—d Indians."

It had never been dreamt of by the sages who got up the Gull Proclamation, that it would befall this engine of war to be pitted against one of its own description; or that the enemy could possibly understand an art which was thought peculiar to the great nation. So it fell out, however, that while the army were wantonly jeopardizing the strong holds of Malden, and preparing their stomachs for dinners out of the pockets of their enemies; the very serious news arrived that a powerful Proclamation, rating an equal force with their own, and manned and equipped "for all contingencies," had been fitted out by the governor of Upper Canada, and was rapidly advancing against them, under a furious escort of Bulls and

Indians. This intelligence was as unexpected as it was overwhelming. To remain and abide the brunt of battle, to confront these mighty and exterminating Proclamations in dubious fray and ruinous assault; would have engendered a scene of sanguinary slaughter unprecedented in the annals of civilized warfare. Besides, the commander of the Gullie army, by the words of his own manifesto, had come there "to look down opposition," not to fight it. And as his force was but the vanguard of a much greater, it was evidently unfair to dose them with a battle calculated for ten times their number. On these weighty considerations it was determined by the general to abandon his precarious situation, and make the best of his way *back again* to the territories he had left. The only difficulty that laboured in his mind was, to imagine how the Gulls would ever be able to *make a triumph* out of a precipitate flight before the enemy. But at last, having quieted himself with the sagacious reflection,

“That when a fight becomes a chase
“Those win the day that win the race,”

he instantly gave orders for every mother's son to make the best of his way to the side of the river where he belonged.

We now behold the redoubtable army of the North West, after having invaded Canada, *taken all of it that was worth taking*, and effected a masterly retreat homeward; at last quietly encamped upon their own dung hill at Detroit. It was confidently expected that hostilities in this quarter would cease, and that no more would be heard of the din of arms, until the god of war should light up the flame of discord in the east, and hurl the firebrands of devastation about the ears of the astonished Quebeckers. But all attempts at pacification were vain and hopeless, notwithstanding that John Bull had been on his marrow bones at the capitol, earnestly begging an armistice to gain a moment's breath from his merciless beating. The great Mo-gul had sworn by the beard of his secretary,

that he would not "trade or barter, by giving or by taking quarter," until the Gulls ceased to be a nation, or Canada was exterminated from the map of the world.

The Bulls already flushed with success, now collected their forces and determined to hazard the attempt of storming the Gulls in their own nest. They crossed the river and set in array a more formidable host than had ever darkened the wilderness with frowns. On one side marched the grim General Brock, having a huge pair of whiskers, and on the other the ill looking warrior Tecumseh, having no whiskers at all. The face of things was now changed, and the exterminating party were in their turn threatened with extermination. Here was a contingency which no one had foreseen, and against which not even the Proclamation had provided. The unhappy and disconsolate commander of the Gulls, unwilling to shed the blood of his followers by confronting their empty guns and hungry bellies with the brawney and beef

fed warriors of the north ; with a heavy heart and a rueful physiognomy, put his reluctant signature to the articles of a general surrender ! And thus the heroes of Tippecanoe, tipped up their canoe in the slough of Detroit.

On the occurrence of this unexpected event, the whole army from the most iron hearted colonel, to the most delicate naiad of a washer woman that followed in its train, was overwhelmed with a flood of shame, and shed tears of vexation and grief. It is positively asserted by Daniel Dobbin and other learned historians, whom the chief of the Gulls has employed to write the annals of this eventful campaign, that at the moment when the general was yielding to the fear of bloodshed and starvation, whole herds of cattle were grazing in the fields, and the delicate mutton of those merinos which had unconditionally surrendered to his arms, was walking on its legs under the noses of the army. It has been asserted by some authors of respectable

authority that the general had sworn a tremendous oath, that he would not lift a butcher knife against an individual of the merino tribe, until their wool should arrive at a degree of maturity and perfection, capable of furnishing him a coat, equal in magnificence to that of his great rival and compeer in the east. Be this as it may, there are many other historians of prodigious veracity who maintain that this very signal disaster was owing to the incompetent force of the Proclamation; which, it is asserted, had not a single *torpedo* in its train, nor even a terrestrial gun-boat for its assistance. However the Gulls did not incline to give credit to the latter opinion.

Courteous and considerate reader, pause here a moment to ponder on the instability of human greatness. Those very Gulls who had made themselves hoarse with the praises of their general, and had filled the very skies with his exploits, now fell upon him with unrelenting fury, and pounced and plucked and roasted him for

a blockhead, a coward and a traitor. So emphatically true is it that pride may have a fall, and that he who rides in the triumphal chariot, may be upset by the jostling of a stone;

“ And from the pinnacle of glory
 “ Fall headlong into purgatory.”

So when the general had made an end of conquering Canada he sat down and sang the following psalm.

Two staunch looking HULLS,
 Fitted out by the Gulls,
 A *Demo.* on land, and a *Fed.* on the water,
 As they cruized for their game,
 With their blood all on flame,
 Made the forest to roar and the ocean to spatter.

The federal Hull
 Gave chase to John Bull,
 And was soon alongside of the thundering Guerrier ;
 With his balls and his powder
 So thickly he plough'd her
 She sunk a mere wreck, and the Gulls ne'er sung
 merrier.

The Demo. on land,
 Proclamation in hand,
 Direct on fort Malden bore down like a navy ;
 There stood General Brock
 In his way, like a rock,
 So the Hull struck and bilged, and the crew cried
 pecavi.

Now the Gulls, all aghast,
 With groans fill the blast,
 And lustily cry "build a navy and man it ;
 And if we must *be gulls*,
 O let us be sea-gulls,
 And give up our conquests to Bidwell and Gannett."

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