

# BENJAMIN WATERHOUSE

A JOURNAL OF A YOUNG  
MAN OF  
MASSACHUSETTS, 2ND  
ED.

**Benjamin Waterhouse**  
**A Journal of a Young Man**  
**of Massachusetts, 2nd ed.**

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*A Journal of a Young Man of Massachusetts, 2nd ed. / Late A Surgeon On Board An American Privateer, Who Was / Captured At Sea By The British, In May, Eighteen Hundred / And Thirteen, And Was Confined First, At Melville Island, / Halifax, Then At Chatham, In England ... And Last, At / Dartmoor Prison. Interspersed With Observations, Anecdotes / And Remarks, Tending To Illustrate The Moral And Political / Characters Of Three Nations. To Which Is Added, A Correct / Engraving Of Dartmoor Prison, Representing The Massacre / Of American Prisoners, Written By Himself.:*

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**... And Last, At / Dartmoor**

**Prison. Interspersed With**

**Observations, Anecdotes /**

## **District of Massachusetts, to wit:**

### **District Clerk's Office**

(L. S.)Be it remembered, that on the sixth day of March, A. D. 1816, and in the fortieth year of the Independence of the United States of America, Rowe & Hooper, of the said District have deposited in this Office, the title of a book, the right whereof they claim as Proprietors, in the words following, to wit:

"A Journal of a Young Man of Massachusetts, late a Surgeon on board an American privateer, who was captured at sea by the British, in May, eighteen hundred and thirteen, and was confined first, at Melville Island, Halifax, then at Chatham, in England, and last at Dartmoor Prison. Interspersed with Observations, Anecdotes and Remarks, tending to illustrate the moral and political characters of three nations. To which is added, a correct Engraving of Dartmoor Prison, representing the Massacre of American prisoners. Written by himself." "Nothing extenuate, or set down aught in malice."... Shakespeare.

In conformity to the Act of the Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the Authors and Proprietors of such Copies, during the times therein mentioned,"

and also to an Act entitled, "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies during the times therein mentioned; and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving and etching, historical, and other prints."

*Wm. S. SHAW,*

*Clerk of the District of Massachusetts.*

# A JOURNAL OF A YOUNG MAN OF MASSACHUSETTS

In December 1812, I found a schooner fitting out of Salem as a privateer. She had only four carriage guns and ninety men. By the fifth of January, 1813, she was ready to sail and only wanted some young man to go as assistant surgeon of her. The offer was made to me, when without much reflection or consultation of friends, I stepped on board her in that capacity, with no other ideas than that of a pleasant cruise and making a fortune. With this in view we steered for the coast of Brazil, which we reached about the first of February.

Our first land-fall was not the most judicious, for we made the coast in the night, and in the morning found ourselves surrounded with breakers. Fortunately for us a Portuguese schooner was outside of us, and we hoisted out our boat and went on board her and received from her commander and officers directions for clearing ourselves from these dangerous breakers. We were then about sixty miles below Cape St. Roque. The captain of the Portuguese vessel kindly informed us where to get water, in a bay then before us. We had English colours flying, and all this time passed for a British vessel.

In a few hours we cast anchor in the bay, when our Captain went on shore and when he had discovered the watering place



he returned on board, and sent his water casks to be filled; but the inhabitants collected around our men, and shewed, by their gestures and grimaces, a disposition to drive us away. It is probable that they only wanted to make us pay for the water; for it is the way of all the inhabitants of the sea shores every where to profit by the distresses of those who are cast upon them. But pretending not to understand them, we got what water was necessary.

The next day a Portuguese ship of war came into the bay, on which we thought it prudent to haul off, as we thought it not so easy to impose on a public ship as on a private one, with our English colours and uniform. In beating up to Pernambuco, we spoke with vessels every day, but they were all Portuguese. When near to St. Salvadore, we were in great danger of being captured by a British frigate, which we mistook for a large merchantman, until she came within half musket shot of us; but, luckily for us, it died away calm, when we out with our oars, which seamen call *sweeps*, and in spite of their round and grape shot, we got clear of her without any serious injury.

We would remark here, that sailors have a dialect of their own, and a phraseology by themselves. Instead of right side, and left side, they say *starboard* and *larboard*. To tie a rope fast, is to *belay* it. To lower down a sail, or to pull down a colour, is to *dowse* it; and so of many other things. These peculiar phrases have been adopted from the Dutch, and from the Danes: nations from whom the English learnt navigation. We may occasionally

use some of these terms, when it cannot well be avoided.

Our captain was not an American, neither was he an Englishman. He was a little bit of a man, of a swarthy complexion, and did not weigh perhaps more than an hundred pounds by the scale. During the firing, our little man stood upon the taffrail, swung his sword, d—d the English, and praised his own men. He had been long enough in the United States to acquire property and information, and credit enough to command a schooner of four guns and ninety men. The crew considered him a brave man, and a good sailor, but not over generous in his disposition. Whether the following is a proof of it, I cannot determine.

He allowed the crew but one gill of New England rum per day, which they thought an under dose for a Yankee. They contended for more, but he refused it. They expostulated, and he remained obstinate; when at length they one and all declared that they would not touch a rope unless he agreed to double the allowance to half a pint. The captain was a very abstemious man himself, and being very small in person, he did not consider that a man four times as big required twice as much rum to keep his sluggish frame in the same degree of good spirits. He held out against his crew for two days, during which time they never one of them so much as lifted a spun-yarn. The weather was, be sure, very mild and pleasant. I confess, however, that I was very uneasy, under the idea that we might all perish, from the obstinacy of the crew, on one side, and the firmness of the little man on the other.

Our captain found that his government was democratical; and perceiving that the weather was about to change, he conceded to the large and fearful majority; and New England spirit carried the day against a temperate European commander.

This habit of rum drinking makes a striking difference between the military of ancient and modern days. If a Roman soldier, or a Carthaginian sailor, had his clothing, his meat, and his bread, and his vinegar, he was contented, and rarely was guilty of mutiny. But the modern soldier and sailor must, in addition to these, have his rum, or brandy, and his *tobacco*; deprive him of these two articles, which are neither food nor clothing, and he infallibly mutinies: that is, he runs the risk of the severest punishment, even that of death, rather than renounce these modern luxuries. I have observed among sailors, that they bear the deprivation of rum with more patience than the deprivation of tobacco. On granting the crew half a pint of rum a day, they gave three cheers, and went to work with the greatest cheerfulness and alacrity.

The Americans, I believe, drink more spirits than the same class of people in England. The labouring people, and sailors, cannot get it in Britain. A soldier whose regiment was quartered in Boston, just before the revolution, held up his bottle to one of the new comers, and exclaimed, "Here is a country for you, by J—s; I have been drunk once to-day, and have got enough left to be drunk again: and all for six coppers!" What they then called *coppers*, we now call *cents*, and the Londoners *hap-pennies*.

The next day we descried three sail steering for St. Salvadore. We gave chase to them; but when we came within gun shot of the stern most, she fired her stern chasers at us. We brought our four guns on one side, to attack, or to defend, as we should find ourselves circumstanced; but night coming on, we saw no more of them.

Our water becoming short, we determined to gain our former watering place; but not being able to reach it easily, we anchored off a little settlement, twenty miles distant from the place where we watered before. Here our captain put on a British uniform, and waited on the commandant of the place who, although he treated him with politeness, gave evident suspicions that he was not an English officer. To prevent the awkward consequences of a detection, our captain promised to send off a barrel of hams, and a keg of butter. Under the expectation of the fulfilment of this rather rash promise, our crafty commander returned to his vessel, and left the place very early next morning.

It was now the middle of March, and we had taken nothing; neither had we fired our cannon, excepting at a miserable sort of a half boat and half raft, called a catamaran: made of five light logs, with a triangular sail. From the men on this miserable vessel we got information of a good watering place, where we soon anchored. The commandant of this little settlement was of the colour of our North American Indians, and so were his family, but the rest were nearly as black as negroes. He lived in a house covered and worked in with long grass; he offered us snuff out of

a box tipped with silver, but every thing else looked very rude and simple. While we were getting our water, the females hovered round us. They had long, black, and shining hair, and wore a long white cotton garment, like a shirt or shift. They seemed to admire our complexions. One of these women, more forward than the rest, opened the bosom of one of our fairest young men, to see if his body was as white as his face. She appeared to be highly amused with the discovery, and called her companions to come and view the phenomenon. He shewed a similar curiosity as it concerned her, but she shrunk from it with the apparent delicacy of polished life, before so many men. The colour of these merry girls was that of the inside of a new leather shoe.

Just as we were about embarking, the commandant told our captain that he had just received a message from the commandant of Gomora, to seize him and all his crew and send them to Pernambuco, but that he should not obey him. We now set sail for the United States, and had not been at sea long before we were chased by a frigate, but out sailed her.

On the 20th of May we made Gay Head, which is the shining remains of an extinguished volcano, on the west end of Martha's Vineyard. The next morning we discovered a ship and a brig standing for us. We tacked and stood for the ship until we found that she was a man of war, and then we wore round for the brig, she being nearest of our own size. We now, for the first time, hoisted American colours, when the brig gave us a broadside, and kept up a constant fire upon us; but we soon left

her by our superior sailing and management. The frigate, for such she proved to be, was not so easily got rid of. She was to the windward of us when we first saw her; and she came within gun shot about noon. She firing her bow-chasers, and we our stern-chasers. At length she came almost within musket shot of us, when she fired repeated broadsides into our little schooner, so as to cut away almost all our rigging, when our brave little captain went down below, after telling the men "to fight it out;" but they prudently struck their colours. A boat soon came on board of us with a lieutenant and twelve marines, swearing most bravely at the d—d *Yankees*. The name Yankee is used with pride by an American sailor or soldier; but with derision by the British. But as our men had, according to custom, when a vessel surrenders, seized whatever casks of liquor they could come at, soon filled out a few horns of gin, and passed it round among the marines, which inspired them with good nature, and for a moment they seemed "all hale fellows well met." The boarding officer did not appear to be so intent in securing the vessel, as in searching every hole and corner for small articles to pocket. The Americans disdain this dishonourable practice. The officers and crews of our men of war have never soiled their characters by taking from their enemies the contents of their chests and pockets, as the commanders of the British frigates, whom we have captured, can testify. We were soon ordered on board of his Britannic Majesty's ship the *Tenedos*, captain Parker.

I had always entertained a respectable opinion of the British,

especially of their national marine. I had read British history, and listened to British songs, and had heard from my childhood of the superior bravery and generosity of the British sailor, and had entertained a real respect for their character; and being of a family denominated *federalists*, I may be said to have entered the frigate Tenedos, captain Parker, with feelings and expectations very different from what I should have felt, had we been at war with the French, and had it been a frigate of that nation that had captured us. The French are a people marked by nature, as well as by customs and habits, a different nation from us. Their language is different, their religion is different, and so are their manners. All those things have conspired in making a wall of separation between us and that lively people. But it is not so with the English. Our language, religion, customs, habits, manners, institutions: and above all, books have united to make us feel as if we were but children of the same great family, only divided by the Atlantic ocean. All these things have a natural and habitual tendency to unite us; and nothing but the unfeeling and contemptuous treatment of us by the British military generally, could have separated us. With all these feelings and partialities about me, I went from our schooner over the side of the British frigate with different feelings from what I should, had I been going on board an enemy's ship of the French, Spanish, or Portuguese nation. But what was my change of feelings, on being driven with the rest all up in a corner like hogs, and then marched about the deck, for the strutting captain of the frigate to view and review us; like

cattle in a market, before the drover or butcher.

When our baggage was brought on board, the master of arms took every portable article from us, not leaving us a jack-knife, pen-knife, or razor. We Americans never conduct so towards British prisoners. We always respect the private articles of the officer and sailor.

On the same day we were put on board the brig *Curlew*, lieutenant Head, a polite and humane gentleman, and much beloved by his own crew. He is, I am informed, son of an English baronet. He is a plain, honest man, with easy, elegant manners, and very unlike the sputtering commander of the *Tenedos*: a man who allowed us to be stripped of all our little pocket articles: not much to the honour of his commission, or credit of his nation. We were kept very close while on board the *Curlew*, because her crew was very weak, principally decrepid old men and boys; but then we were kindly spoken to, and respectfully and humanely treated by lieutenant Head, and his worthy surgeon. We can discover real gentlemen at sea as well as on shore.

We were landed in Halifax, the principal British port of North America, and the capital of Nova Scotia, on the 29th of May, 1813. We were soon surrounded by soldiers, and being joined by a number of our countrymen, recently captured, we were attempted to be marshalled and paraded in military order, so as to make as grand a show as possible, while marching through the streets to prison. The first thing they did was to make us stand in platoons, and then the commanding officer stationed a



soldier on the flanks of each platoon to keep us regular, and to march and wheel according to rule. The word was then given to *march*, when we all ran up together just as we were when the strutting captain Parker reviewed us on the deck of the Tenedos. We were then commanded to *halt*. As we have no such word of command on board of an American privateer, some crowded on, while a few stopped. The young officer tried again, and made us stand all in a row. Some of the crew told their comrades that when the captain sung out "*halt*," he meant "*avast*," and that then they should all stop. When we were all in order again, the scarlet-coated young gentleman, with a golden swab on his left shoulder, gave a second time the word of command, "*march*;" by which word we all understood he meant, "*to heave a head*," when we got into the like confusion again, when he cried out in a swearing passion, "*halt*," on which some stopped short, and some walked on, when the whole squad burst out a laughing. I know not what would have been the consequence of his ridiculous passion had not a navy officer, standing by, observed to him, that they were not soldiers but sailors, who knew nothing about military marching, or military words of command, when the young man told us to march on in our own way; upon which our sailors stuck their fists in their pockets, and scrabbled and reeled on as sailors always do; for a sailor does not know how to walk like a landsman. On which account I have been informed, since my return from captivity, that all our seamen, that were sent from Boston to Sackett's harbour, on Lake Ontario, were

transported in coaches with four horses, chartered for the express purpose; and that it was common, for many weeks together, to see a dozen of the large stage coaches, setting out from Boston in a morning, full of sailors going up to the lakes, to man the fleets of commodores Perry, Chauncey and M'Donough. The former of these commanders told the writer, that he never allowed a sailor destined for his squadron to walk a single day. These merry fellows used to ride through the country with their colors, and streamers and music, and heaving the lead amidst the acclamations of the country people, who delight in a sailor and in a ship. While these things were thus conducted in New-England, the people of Old England were simple enough to believe that the war with England was unpopular. They judged of us by our party newspapers.

The soldiers marched us about two miles, when we came to the spot, where we were to take boat for Melville Island, the place of our imprisonment. When we arrived at the gates of the prison, hammocks and blankets were served out to us, as our names were called over. We were then ordered into the prison yard. And here I must remark, that I shall never forget the first impression, which the sight of my wretched looking countrymen made on my feelings. Here we were, at once, surrounded by a ragged set of *quidnuncs*, eagerly inquiring *What news?* where we were taken? and how? and what success we had met with before we were taken? and every possible question, for American curiosity to put to a promiscuous set of new comers.

After satisfying these brave fellows, who felt an uncommon interest in the events of the war, and the news of the day, I had time to notice the various occupations of these poor fellows. Some were washing their own clothes; others mending them. Others were intent on ridding their shirts and other clothing from lice, which, to the disgrace of the British government, are allowed to infest our prisoners. It may, in part, be owing to the nastiness and negligence of the prisoners themselves, but the great fault and the disgrace, remain with the British. Whoever could say that criminals, confined in our state prisons, were infested with vermin?—Were our prison ships in Boston or Salem ever known to be lousy? Shame on, you Britons!

The buildings on Melville Island are constructed of wood. Beside the prison, there is a cooking house, barracks for soldiers, and a store-house; a house for the officers, and another for the surgeon. There are a couple of cannon pointing towards the prison; and a telegraph, for the purpose of giving intelligence to the fort, which overlooks this island and the town of Halifax. These buildings are painted red, and have upon the whole, a neat appearance. The prison itself is two hundred feet in length, and fifty in breadth. It is two stories high; the upper one is for officers, and for the infirmary and dispensary; while the lower part is divided into two prisons, one for the French, the other for Americans. The prison yard is little more than an acre—the whole island being little more than five acres. It is connected on the south side with the main land by a bridge. The parade, so

called, is between the turnkey's house and the barracks. From all which it may be gathered that Melville Island is a very humble garrison, and a very dreary spot for the officer who commands there.

The view from the prison exhibits a range of dreary hills. On the northern side are a few scattered dwellings, and some attempts at cultivation; on the southern nothing appears but immense piles of rocks, with bushes, scattered here and there in their hollows and crevices; if their summer appearance conveys the idea of barrenness, their winter appearance must be dreadful in this region of almost everlasting frost and snow. This unfruitful country is rightly named *New Scotland*.—Barren and unfruitful as old Scotland is, our *Nova Scotia* is worse. If Churchill were alive, what might he not say of this rude and unfinished part of creation, that glories in the name of "*New Scotland*?" The picture would here be complete if it were set off with here and there a meagre and dried up highlander, without shoes, stockings or breeches, with a ragged plaid, a little blue flat bonnet, sitting on a bleak rock playing a bag-pipe, and singing the glories of a country that never was conquered! To finish the picture, you have only to imagine a dozen more ragged, raw-boned Scotchmen, sitting on the bare rocks around the piper, knitting stockings to send to England and America, where they can afford to wear them. Such is Scotia, old and new, whose sons are remarkable for their inveterate hatred of the Americans, as we shall see in the course of this narrative.

As to the inside of the prison at Melville Island, if the American reader expects to hear it represented as a place resembling the large prisons for criminals in the United States, such as those at Boston, Charlestown, New York, or Philadelphia, he will be sadly disappointed. Some of these prisons are as clean and nearly as comfortable, as some of the monasteries and convents in Europe. Our new prisons in the United States reflect great honor on the nation. They speak loudly that we are a considerate and humane people; whereas the prison at Halifax, erected solely for the safe keeping of prisoners of war, resembles an horse stable, with stalls or stanchions, for separating the cattle from each other. It is to a contrivance of this sort that they attach the cords that support those canvass bags, or cradles, called hammocks. Four tier of these hanging-nests were made to swing one above another, between these stalls or stanchions. To those unused to these lofty sleeping-births, they were rather unpleasant situations for repose. But use makes every thing easy.

The first time I was shut up for the night, in this prison, it distressed me too much to close my eyes. Its closeness and smell were, in a degree, disagreeable, but this was trifling to what I experienced afterwards, in another place. The general hum and confused noise from almost every hammock, was at first, very distressing. Some would be lamenting their hard fate at being shut up like negro slaves in a Guinea ship, or like fowls in a hen coop, for no crime, but for fighting the battles of their country. Some were cursing and execrating their oppressors; others, late

at night, were relating their adventures to a new prisoner; others lamenting their aberrations from rectitude, and disobedience of parents, and head strong wilfulness, that drove them to sea, contrary to their parents' wish, while others of the younger class, were sobbing out their lamentations at the thoughts of what their mothers and sisters suffered, after knowing of their imprisonment. Not unfrequently the whole night was spent in this way, and when, about day break, the weary prisoner fell into a dose, he was waked from his slumber by the grinding noise of the locks, and the unbarring of the doors, with the cry of "*turn out—all out,*" when each man took down his hammock and lashed it up, and slung it on his back, and was ready to answer to the roll call of the turnkey. If any, through natural heaviness, or *indisposition*, was dilatory, he was sure to feel the bayonet of the brutal soldier, who appeared to us to have a natural antipathy to a sailor, and from what I observed, I believe that in general little or no love is lost between them.

This prison is swept out twice a week, by the prisoners.—The task is performed by the respective messes in turns.—When the prison is washed, the prisoners are kept out until it is perfectly dry. This, in the wet seasons, and in the severity of winter, is sometimes very distressing and dangerous to health; for there is no retiring place for shelter; it is like a stable, where the cattle are either under cover, or exposed to the weather, be it ever so inclement.

When we arrived here in May, 1813, there were about nine

hundred prisoners; but many died by the severity of the winter; for the quantity of fuel allowed by the British government was insufficient to convey warmth through the prison. The men were cruelly harrassed by the barbarous custom of mustering and parading them in the severest cold, and even in snow storms. The agent, *Miller*, might have alleviated the sufferings of our people, had he been so disposed, without relaxation of duty. But he, as well as the turnkey, named *Grant*, seemed to take delight in tormenting the Americans. This man would often keep the prisoners out for many hours, in the severest weather, when the mercury was ten and fifteen degrees below zero, under a pretext that the prison had been washed, and was not sufficiently dry for their reception: when in fact every drop of water used was in a moment ice. People in the southern states, and the inhabitants of England and Ireland, can form no adequate idea of the frightful climate of Nova Scotia. The description of the sufferings of our poor fellows the past winter, was enough to make one's heart ach, and to rouse our indignation against the agents in this business.

Our people are sensible to kind treatment, and are ready to acknowledge humane and considerate conduct towards themselves, or towards their companions; but they are resentful in proportion as they are grateful. They speak very generally of the conduct of Miller, the agent, and Grant, the turnkey, with disgust and resentment. A complaint was made to him of the badness of the beef served out to the prisoners, upon which he collected the prisoners, and mounting the stair-case, began a most passionate

harrangue, declaring that the beef was good enough, and a d—d deal better than they had in their own country: and if they did not eat it they should have none. He then went on as follows "Hundreds of you, d—d scoundrels, have been to me begging and pleading that I would interpose my influence that you might be the first to be exchanged, to return home to your families, who were starving in your absence; and now you have the impudence to tell me to my face, that the king's beef is not good enough for your dainty stomachs. Why some of that there beef is good enough for me to eat. You are a set of mean rascals, you beg of an enemy the favours which your own government won't grant you. You complain of ill treatment, when you never fared better in your lives. Had you been in a French prison, and fed on horse beef, you would have some grounds of complaint; but here in his Britannic Majesty's royal prison, you have every thing that is right and proper for persons taken fighting against his crown and dignity. There is a surgeon here for you if you are sick, and physic for you to take if you are sick, and a hospital to go to into the bargain; and if you die, there are boards enough (pointing to a pile of lumber in the yard) for to make you coffins, and an hundred and fifty acres of land to bury you in; and if you are not satisfied with all this, you may die and be d—d." Having finished this eloquent harrangue, orator Miller descended from his rostrum, and strutted out of the prison yard, accompanied with hisses from some of the prisoners.

On a re-examination, however, of the "king's beef," some



pieces were found too much tainted for a dog to eat, and the prisoners threw it over the pickets. After this the supply of wholesome meat was such as it ought to be; full good enough for Mr. Miller himself to eat; and some of the very best pieces good enough for Mr. Grant, the turnkey.

In all this business of provision for prisoners of war, one thing ought to be taken into consideration, which may be offered as an extenuation of crime alledged against the British agents for prisoners; and that is, that the American soldier and sailor live infinitely better in America, than the same class of people do in Great Britain and Ireland. Generally speaking, an American eats three times the quantity of animal food that fall to the share of the same class of people in England, Holland, Germany, Denmark, or Sweden. He sleeps more comfortably, and lives in greater plenty of fish, flesh, vegetables, cider, and spirituous liquors. Add to this, his freedom is in a manner unbounded. He speaks his mind to any man. If he thinks he is wronged, he seeks redress with confidence; if he is insulted, he resents it; and if you should venture to strike him, he never will rest quiet under the dishonour; yet you seldom or ever hear of quarrels ending in murder. The dagger and pistol are weapons in a manner unknown. The fist, *a la mode* de John Bull, is commonly the ultimatum of a Yankee's revenge.

We often hear the British, if they are unsuccessful, lamenting the war between England and America; they call it an unhappy strife between brethren; and they attribute this "unnatural war,"

to a French influence; and their friends in New England, who are denominated *tories*, use the same language. They say that all the odium of the war ought to fall on our administration and their wicked seducers, the French; and yet you will find that both in England, and at Halifax, the French meet with better treatment than their dear brothers, the Americans.

We found that there were about two hundred French prisoners in Nova Scotia. Some had been there ever since 1803. Few of them were confined in prison. The chief of them lived in or near the town of Halifax, working for the inhabitants, or teaching dancing, or fencing, or their own language. Some were employed as butchers and cooks; others as nurses in the hospital; and they were every where favoured for their complaisance, obedience, and good humour. They had the character of behaving better towards the British officers and inhabitants than the Americans, and I believe with reason; for our men seem to take a delight in plaguing, embarrassing, and alarming those who were set over them. A Frenchman always tried to please, while many Americans seemed to take an equal delight in letting the Nova Scotians know that they longed to be at liberty to fight them again. I confess I do not wonder that the submissive, smiling Frenchmen made more friends at Halifax than the ordinary run of American seamen, who seemed too often to look and speak as if they longed to try again the tug of war with John Bull.

Sunday being a leisure day among the men of business in Halifax and its vicinity, the old *refugees* from the United States

used to come round the prison to gratify their evil eyes, instead of going to a place of worship, with the sight of what they called "*rebels*." These are generally Scotchmen, or sons of Scotchmen, and are very bitter against the Americans. Some of this class were clergymen, who came occasionally to pray and preach with us in prison. We paid every mark of respect to every modest and prudent minister who came among us to perform divine service; but we never could restrain our feelings, when one of these refugee gentlemen came among us, praying for king George and the royal family of England. The men considered it as an insult, and resented it accordingly. Some of these imprudent men would fulminate the vengeance of Heaven, for what they conceived *political*, instead of moral errors. The prisoners respected some of these reverend gentlemen highly, while they despised some others. The priesthood, however, have less hold on the minds of the people of the United States, than of any other people on earth.

The Bishops and Church of England are fast destroying their own craft, by aiding the sly *dissenters* in spreading the bible through every family in Britain, and in America. In reading this blessed book, the people will see how Christianity has been corrupted. They will compare the archbishops and dignified clergy of the present degenerate days, with the plainness of our Saviour, and with the simplicity of the holy fishermen, and other of his disciples. Before this book the factitious institutions and gorgeous establishments of the modern priesthood will fade and die, like Jonah's gourd. The English Episcopacy never has, nor

ever will, take deep root in the United States. It can never flourish in the American soil. Even the Roman Catholic religion is here a humble and rational thing. Its ministers are highly respected, because their lives adorn their doctrines; and the parochial care of their flock, who are principally Irish, is seen and commended. It is observed throughout our sea ports, that the seafaring people are generous supporters of their ministers; but these same people can never be made to pay tythes, or to hear and support a minister whom they had not directly or remotely chosen. This is the predominant sentiment of all the Anglo-Americans.

The daily allowance of the British government to our prisoners, is one pound of bread, one pound of beef, and one gill of peas. Over and above this we received from the American agent a sufficiency of coffee, sugar, potatoes, and *tobacco*. The first may be called the bare necessities of life, but the latter contribute much to its comfortable enjoyment. Whether the British government ought not to have found the whole, I am not prepared to determine; but certainly, before this addition from our own agent, our men complained bitterly: and it is a fact, that the agent here more than once detained tobacco, sent as a present to us from our agent at Boston.

In justice to Mr. Miller, the British agent, I ought to record that he paid great attention to the cleanliness of the prison, and to the clothes of the men; and I must, at the same time, say that some of our men were very dirty, lazy fellows, that required constantly spurring up to keep them from being offensive. This indolent and

careless disposition was observed to be chiefly among those who had been formerly intemperate; they felt the loss of their beloved stimulus, their spirits sunk, and they had rather lay down and rot, and die, than exert themselves. There were a few who seemed to be like hogs, innately dirty, and who had rather lie dirty than clean. Mr. Miller had therefore great merit in compelling these men to follow the rules prescribed to the whole prison. For this he had the thanks of every considerate American.

It was a common remark, that the most indolent and most slovenly men were the most vicious; and a dirty external was a pretty sure indication of a depraved mind. Such as would not conform to the rules of cleanliness were committed to the *black hole*, which was under the prison, and divided into solitary cells. The agent had the power of confining a prisoner in one of these dungeons during ten days. It is to the credit of our seamen to remark, that they co-operated with the agent most heartily in whatever tended to preserve the cleanliness of their persons, and they applauded the confinement of such as were disinclined to follow the salutary rules of the prison.

We were one day not a little shocked by the arrival of a number of American soldiers who were entrapped and taken with Colonel *Boestler*, in Upper Canada. They exhibited a picture of starvation, misery, woe, and despair. Their miserable condition called forth our sympathy and compassion, and I may add, excited our resentment against the authors of their distress. These unfortunate landmen had never been used to "rough it" like

sailors, but had lived the easy life of farmers and mechanics. Some of them had never experienced the hardships of a soldier's life, but were raw, inexperienced militia men. They were taken at some creek between Fort George and Little York, by the British and their allies the Indians, who stripped them of most of their clothing, and then wore them down by very long and harrassing marches; first to Montreal, and then to Quebec; and soon after crowded them on board transports, like negroes in a Guinea ship, where some suffered a lingering death, and others merely escaped it. It appears from their account, and from every other account, that the treatment of these poor fellows at their capture, and on their march, and more especially *on board the transports from Quebec to Halifax*, was barbarous in the extreme, and highly disgraceful to the British name and nation.

We have it asserted uniformly, that the prisoners, who came from Quebec to Halifax and to Boston, down the St. Lawrence, were treated and provided for in a manner little above brutes. Colonel Scott, now Major General Scott, came by that route from Quebec to Boston, and it is well known that he complained, that there were neither accommodations, provisions, nor any thing on board the ship proper for a gentleman. He spoke of the whole treatment he received with deep disgust and pointed resentment. If an officer of his rank and accomplishments had so much reason for complaint, we may easily conceive what the private soldier must have endured.

We paid every attention in our power to these poor soldiers,

whose emaciated appearance and dejection gave us reason to expect that an end would soon be put to their sufferings by death. They, however, recruited fast; and we were soon convinced, that they were reduced to the condition we saw them in, absolutely *for want of food*. The account which these soldiers gave of their hardships was enough to fill with rage and resentment the heart of a saint. Four men were not allowed more provisions than what was needful for one. They assured us, that if they had not secretly come at some bags of ship bread, unknown to the officers of the transport, they must have perished *for want of food*. We cannot pass over one anecdote. Some fish were caught by our own people on the passage, in common with the crew, but they were compelled to deliver them all to the captain of the ship, who withheld them from the American prisoners. Some of the prisoners had a little money, and the captain of the transport was mean enough to take a dollar for a single cod fish, from men in their situation. This fact has appeared in several Boston papers, with the names of the persons concerned, and has never been contradicted or doubted. We give this as the common report; and as the Boston newspapers circulated freely through Nova Scotia and Canada, we infer, that had the story been void of truth, it would have been contradicted. This has been amply confirmed.

Those Americans who have no other knowledge of the English character, but what they gather from books made in London; and from their dramatic productions, and from their national songs, would believe, as I myself once did, that *John Bull*, (by which

name Dean Swift personified the whole nation) was a humane, tender-hearted, generous gentleman; but let him be once in the power of an Englishman, or what is still worse, of a Scotchman, and it will correct his erroneous notions. An Englishman is strongly attached to his king and country; and thinks nothing on earth can equal them, while he holds all the rest of the world in comparative contempt. Until the days of Bonaparte, the people of England really believed that one Englishman could flog six Frenchmen. They, at one time, had the same idea of us, Americans; but the late war has corrected their articles of belief. The humanity of the British is one of the most monstrous impositions, now afloat in the world.

The most glaring feature in the English character is a vain glorious ostentation, as is exhibited in their elegant and costly steeples, superb hospitals, useless cathedrals, *lying* columns; such as the monument near London bridge, which as Pope says of it,

**"Lifts its tall head and *lies*."**

But if you wish to learn their real character, look at their bloody code of laws, read their wars with Wales, with Scotland, and with Ireland. Look at India, and at their own West India Islands. Look at the present "border war" carried on by associating themselves with our savages; look into this very prison, ask the soldiers just brought into it, what they think of British humanity or British bravery. A reliance on British



veracity and honour caused these poor fellows to surrender, when they found them worse than the Indians. These things may be forgiven, but they ought never to be forgotten.

Nova Scotia, or *New Scotland*, was formerly called *Chebucto* by the native Indians. It is a dreary region. The country, for many miles west of Halifax, is a continued range of mountains, rising one over the other, as far as the eye can reach. The winters are severe, and the springs backward. The trees appeared to be as bare on the 26th of May as the same kind of trees do in the middle of March, with us in Massachusetts. To us there was something hideous in the aspect of their mountains; but this may have been partly owing to our own hideous habitation, and low spirits. The same objects may have appeared charming in the eyes of a Scotch family, just arrived from the fag-end of the Island of Great Britain.

The capital, *Halifax*, was settled by a number of British subjects in 1749. It is situated on a spacious and commodious bay or harbour, called *Chebucto*, of a bold and easy entrance, where a thousand of the largest ships might ride with safety. The town is built on the west side of the harbor, and on the declivity of a commanding hill, whose summit is two hundred and thirty-six feet perpendicular from the level of the sea. The town is laid out into oblong squares; the streets parallel and at right angles. The town and suburbs are about two miles in length; and the general width a quarter of a mile. It contained in 1793, about four thousand inhabitants and seven hundred houses. At the northern

extremity of the town, is the king's naval yard, completely built and supplied with stores of every kind for the royal navy. The harbor of Halifax is reckoned inferior to no place in British America for the seat of government, being open and accessible at all seasons of the year, when almost all other harbors in these provinces are locked up with ice; also from its entrance, situation, and its proximity to the bay of Fundy, and principal interior settlements of the province. This city lying on the S coast of Nova Scotia has communication with Pictou, sixty-eight miles to the NE on the gulf of St. Lawrence, by a good cart road finished in 1792. It is twelve miles northerly of Cape Sambro, which forms in part the entrance of the bay; twenty-seven south easterly of Windsor, forty N by E of Truro, eighty NE by E of Annapolis, on the bay of Fundy, and one hundred and fifty-seven SE of St. Ann, in New Brunswick, measuring in a straight line. N lat. 44, 40, W lon. 63, 15.

It was settled chiefly by Scotchmen; and since the revolutionary war, which secured our independence, they have received considerable additions from the United States, of a class of men denominated refugees, who exiled themselves, on account of our republicanism, and of their own attachment to the best of kings. They show too often their hatred to us. To this day they call us "*rebels*;" and they speak to us in a style and tone as if they were sorry they could not murder us without the risk of being hanged.

In 1757 to 1759, when the British were engaged in a war with

the French and Indians, and were in possession of Halifax with a large land and naval force, they were obliged to fetch their wood for fuel from Boston, as they could not venture, (says Capt. Knox, their military historian) beyond their walls and breastworks; and yet "*thinking Johnny Bull*" sent a land and naval force to conquer us, in 1814! of all "*thinking*" beings, of which we have ever had an account this Mr. *Bull* is the strangest! Peradventure much thinking has had the same effect on this poor gentleman that *much learning* has had on another.

It is strange, it is passing strange, that a whole people should be so strongly attached to the honor, crown and dignity of their conquerors, as the Scotch are to the present royal family of England, whose ancestor was, in fact, an usurper of the crown and dignities of the Scotch race of kings, the self sufficient Stewarts. The most remarkable thing in the reign of George the 3d (besides that of loosing America) is the perfect conciliation of the Scotch. Whether this was owing to my Lord Bute, or to his relation, I am unable to say; but it is a singular thing in the history of nations, when we take into consideration the cruel treatment of the Scotch so low down as the year 1745. As there is no new thing under the sun, and what has been may be again, who knows but that the *Cherokees* and *Choctaws*, the *Chippewas*, the *Hurons*, the *Pottowatomies* and *Kickapoos*, may hereafter become most attached to our government, and afford us Judges, Secretaries of State, Admirals, Generals, Governors of Provinces, Grooms of the Poet's Stool, and Historians? Who

knows but the day will come, when there shall spring up from the mud and ooze of our own trifling lakes, another *Walter Scott*, who shall sing as sublimely the story of *our* border-wars; and who shall be able to trace a long and illustrious line of ancestry, up to the renowned chief *Split-log, Walk-in-the-water, Hanging-maw*, or to *Tecumsch*? Who knows but that among these American Highlanders, we may find another *Ossian* and another *Fingal*? for what has been, under similar circumstances, may be again.

Early in the month of July, we were not a little disturbed by the arrival of the crew of our ill omened, ill fated Chesapeake.

The capture of this American frigate by the British frigate Shannon of equal force, was variously related. From all that I could gather, she was not judiciously brought into action, nor well fought after Capt. Lawrence fell. It is too much like the British to hunt up every possible excuse for a defeat; but we must conclude, and I have since found it a general opinion in the United States, that the frigate was by no means in a condition to go into action. The captain was a stranger to his own crew; his ship was lumbered up with her cables and every thing else. She ought to have cruised three or four days before she met the Shannon, and that, it seems, was the opinion of the brave captain of the British frigate; who was every way prepared for the action.

The rapid destruction of the British sloop of war Peacock, gave Lawrence high reputation; and he felt as if he must act up to his high character. He seemed like a hero impelled, by high ideas of chivalry, to fight, conquer or die, without attending to

the needful cautions and preparations. His first officer he left sick on shore, who died a few days after the battle; his next officer was soon killed; soon after which he fell himself, uttering the never to be forgotten words, "Don't give up the Ship," which has since become a sort of national motto. While the British captain prudently dressed himself in a short jacket and round hat, so as not to distinguish himself from the other officers, our Capt. Lawrence, who was six feet and upwards tall, was in his uniform and military hat, a fair and inviting mark for the enemy's sharp shooters. No one doubted his bravery, but some have called his prudence in question.

This heroic man and his Lieutenant, *Ludlow*, were three times buried with great military pomp; first at Halifax—then at Salem, and last of all at New-York. The name of Lawrence is consecrated in America, while his ever unlucky ship is doomed to everlasting ignominy; for this was the vessel that preferred allowing the British ship *Leopard* to *muster her crew*, instead of sinking, with her colors flying.

In the month of August, Halifax was alarmed, or pretended to be alarmed, by a rumor that the prisoners on Melville Island, which is about three miles, or less, from the town, meditated a sally, with the determination of seizing the capital of Nova Scotia. They immediately took the most serious precautions, and screwed up their municipal regulations to the highest pitch. All the loyal citizens entrusted with arms, were ordered to keep themselves in readiness to march at a minute's warning to repel

the meditated attack of about a thousand unarmed Yankees, rendered formidable by a reinforcement of a few dozen half starved soldiers, who were taken by the Indians and British, and sent from Quebec down the river St. Lawrence to the formidable American post on Melville Island, under the command of turnkey Grant! who was himself under the command of Lieut. General Mr. Agent Miller!

It was reported and believed by many in Halifax, that the prisoners had made arrangements for the attack, and had sworn to massacre every man, woman and child. When we found that they really believed the ridiculous story, we must confess that we enjoyed their terror, and laughed, inwardly, at their formidable precautions of defence. They placed a company of artillery, with two pieces of cannon on a height south of the prison; and cleared up a piece of land, and stationed another corps of artillery with a cannon so placed as to rake our habitation lengthwise, while sentries were placed at regulated distances on the road, all the way into the town of Halifax. An additional number of troops were stationed on the island, who *bivouacked*<sup>1</sup> in the open air near to the officers' dwellings; in other words, they were placed there to prevent us from cutting the officers' throats with clam shells, or oyster shells, for we had nothing metallic for the purpose.

When we saw these formidable preparations, and reflected on

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<sup>1</sup> *Bivouacked* is laying, sleeping, eating, and drinking on the ground with their arms, without tents, or any covering, and is only voluntarily resorted to, when the greatest danger is apprehended.

our own helpless condition, without any means of offence, beside our teeth and nails, we could not but despise our enemies; and we did not omit to increase their ridiculous alarm, by whispering together, pointing our fingers sometimes E. and sometimes W. and sometimes N. and sometimes S. and rubbing our hands and laughing, and affecting to be in high spirits. The conduct of the agent at this threatening crisis of his affairs, did not diminish our contempt of him. He would often mount his rostrum, the head of the stair-case, to address us, and assure us, that we should soon be delivered from our confinement, and be sent home. He said that he did not expect to see any of us in prison six weeks longer; and that our detention was then only owing to some delay of orders from admiral Warren; but that he expected them every moment. He therefore entreated us to remain contented and quiet a little longer, and not obstruct the kind intentions that were in train for our deliverance from captivity; and he assured us, upon his honour, that every thing should be done in his power to expedite our return home; that there were then three cartels getting ready to convey us away. In the mean time every thing was said and done at Halifax to make us satisfied and quiet.

While the agent was making his declarations of friendship, and protesting upon his honour, that we should be sent home, he knew full well that the greatest part of the prisoners were to be sent across the Atlantic, to suffer the punishment of a British prison. The policy of the English government was, it seems, to discourage the enlistment of soldiers into our service by sending

the prisoners, taken on the frontiers, to England. They meant also to distress us by accumulating our seamen in their prisons; and this they imagined would disenable us from manning our men of war, or sending out privateers. They preferred every mode of distressing us to that of fair fighting; for, in fair fight and equal numbers, we have always beat them by sea, and by land.

We were in good humor and high spirits, at the prospect of leaving our loathsome den, and once more returning home to see our mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, and school-fellows, and the old jolly companions of our happy days. We smiled upon Mr. Agent Miller, and he upon us. We greeted our turnkey, the now and then smooth tongued Mr. Grant, with a good morrow, and all feelings of hostility were fast subsiding; and one told him that he should be very glad to see him in Boston; another said he should be very glad to see him in Marblehead, and another at New-York, and Baltimore, and so on.

Towards the close of the month of August, and after Mr. Agent Miller and the military had taken the most effectual method to provide against the possibility of resistance from the prisoners, reports now and then reached us, that the expected exchange was unhappily broken off, and that it was the fault of the American government. These things were hinted with great caution, as not entitled to entire credit; the next day it was said, that the business of exchange was in a prosperous train. All this was done by way of feeling the pulse of the most respectable of the prisoners; those most likely to take the lead in an insurrection.



We could easily trace all these different stories to the cunning Mr. Miller, through his subordinate agents.

On the first day of September, 1813, an hundred of us prisoners were selected from different crews, and ordered to get our baggage ready and be at the gate at a certain hour. On enquiring of our keeper, Mr. Grant, what was the design of this order, he replied with his habitual duplicity, that we were "*to be sent home.*" When Mr. Miller was asked the same question, he replied, that he had a particular reason for not answering the question; but none of us doubted, from the selection from different crews, but that we were about to be sent to our beloved country and natal homes. We left the prison with light hearts, not without pitying our companions, who were doomed to wait a while longer before they could be made so happy as we then felt. We stepped on board the boats with smiling countenances. The barge men told us that the ships we were going to were cartels.

Having arrived among the shipping, the officer of the boat was asked which of these several ships was the cartel—"There," said he, pointing to an old 44, "*is the ship which is to take you to old England.*" Heavens above! What a stroke of thunder was this! We looked at each other with horror, with dismay, and stupefaction, before our depressed souls recoiled with indignation! such a change of countenance I never beheld! Had we been on the deck of a ship, and been informed that a match was just about being touched to her magazine of powder, we should not have exhibited such a picture of paleness and dismay. The deception was cruel;

the duplicity was infamous. The whole trick from beginning to end, was an instance of cowardice, meanness and villany. It proves that cowards are cruel; that barbarity and sincerity never meet in the same bosom.

We now saw that the rumor of our rising upon our keepers, and marching to Halifax was a miserable falsehood, spread abroad for no other purpose than to double our guards, and prevent the imagined consequences of desperation, should it be discovered that we were to be sent across the Atlantic. It is possible we might have succeeded in disarming the soldiers on the island, and taken their cannon; but for want of more arms we could have done but little. Had we all been armed, we could have entered Halifax, and put to the test the bravery of these loyalists: but an unarmed multitude are nothing before an eighth part of their number of regular soldiers. Military men in Halifax could never have had a moment's serious apprehension from the prisoners on Melville Island. It is my firm opinion, however, that had we been apprized of our cruel destination, we should have risen upon the boats, and attempted an escape, or sold our lives dearly. Revenge and desperation have done wonders; and both would have steeled the heart and nerved the arm of our little band of sufferers. Had we not been beguiled with the lies of the agent and his turnkey, we should have given our enemies a fresh proof of American bravery, if not imprudence. Had Miller been on board the boat with us, we should most certainly have thrown him overboard. His base and dishonourable artifice, first to raise

our hopes and expectations to the height of joy, and then to sink us in despair, was an infamous deed, worthy such a reward. Speaking for myself, I declare, that my heart sunk within me, and I came near fainting, and it was some time before tears came to my relief; then in a burst of indignation, I cursed the perfidious enemy, and felt my soul wound up to deeds of desperation.

## CHAPTER II

Had the agent informed us of the orders of his government, and made us acquainted with our destination, we should have braced our minds up to the occasion, and submitted to our hard fate like men. We should have said to each other in the language of Shakespeare—"if these things be necessities, let's meet them like necessities;" but to be deceived and duped, and cajoled into a state of great joy and exultation, and then, in an instant, precipitated into the dark and cold regions of despair, was barbarous beyond expression. As much resentment as I feel towards Miller and his subalterns, I cannot wish either of them to suffer the pangs I felt at the idea of this floating dungeon.

The late Governor Gerry, in one of his communications to the legislature of Massachusetts, when speaking of the impressment and ill usage of our seamen by the English, calls a British man-of-war "*a floating Pandemonium*." I never felt the force of that expression until I entered on board this floating hell.

After some difficulty and delay we got ourselves and bedding up the side of the ship; and as our names were called over, our bedding was served out to us. We informed the officer that there were but seventy blankets for an hundred men; to which he replied, that he had orders to serve out blankets in the same proportion as they served out our provisions. To understand this, the reader must know that the British have been in the habit, all

the war, of giving to their prisoners a less quantity of food than to their own men. They uniformly gave to *six* of us the same quantity which they gave to *four* of their own sailors. If what they allowed to their own men was barely sufficient, what they gave to us could not be enough to satisfy the cravings of hunger; and this we all found to be the case.

The crew of the man of war sleep on the deck which is next under the gun deck, while our destination was on the deck under that. It was to the ship what the cellar is to a house. It was under water, and of course, without windows, or air holes. All the air and light came through the hatch way, a sort of trap door or cellar way. In this floating dungeon, we miserable young men spent our first night, in sleepless anguish, embittered with the apprehension of our suffering cruel death by suffocation. Here the black hole of Calcutta rose to my view in all its horrors; and the very thought stopped my respiration, and set my brain on fire. In my distress, I stamped with my feet, and beat my head against the side of the ship in the madness of despair. I measured the misery of those around me by what I myself suffered. Shut up in the dark with ninety-nine distressed young men, like so many galley slaves, or Guinea negroes, excluded from the benefit of the common air, without one ray of light or comfort, and without a single word expressive of compassion from any officer of the ship. I never was so near sinking into despair. We naturally cling to life, but now I should have welcomed death. To be confined, and even chained any where in the light of the sun, is a distressing

thing, especially to very young men, but to be crowded into a dirty hole in the dark, where there was no circulation of air is beyond expression horrible. Perhaps my study of the human frame, and my knowledge of the vital property of the air, and of the philosophy of the vital functions, may have added to my distress. I remembered what I had read and learnt in the course of my education, viz: that every full grown person requires *forty-eight thousand* cubic inches of air in an hour, or *one million, one hundred and fifty-two thousand* cubic inches in the course of a day; and that if this is once received into the lungs and breathed out again, it cannot be breathed a second time, till it is mixed with the common atmospheric air. When I considered that our number amounted to an hundred, I could not drive from my mind this calculation, and the result of it nearly deprived me of my reason. The horrors of the *Black Hole of Calcutta* have been long celebrated, because *Englishmen* suffered and perished in it. Now the English have more than a *thousand* black holes into which they unfeelingly thrust their impressed men, and their prisoners of war. Their tenders that lay in the Thames, off Tower-wharf, are so many *black holes* into which they thrust their own people, whom their press gangs seize in the streets of London, and crowd into them like so many live rabbits or chickens carrying in a cart to market. My reflections on these things have greatly changed my opinion of the English character in point of humanity.

After passing a wretched night, one of the petty officers came down to us, by which event we learnt that it was morning. I

found myself much indisposed; my tongue was dry and coated with a furr; my head ached violently, and I felt no inclination to take any thing but cold water. A degree of calmness, however, prevailed among my fellow prisoners. They found lamentations unavailing, and complaints useless. Few of them, beside myself, had lost their appetites, and several expressed a wish for some breakfast. Preparations were soon made for this delicious repast. The first step was to divide us into messes, six in a mess. To each mess was given a wooden *kid*, or *piggin*, as our farmers call them, because it is out of such wooden vessels that they feed their pigs that are fattening for the market. At 8 o'clock one was called from each mess, by the whistle of the boatswain's mate, to attend at the galley, the nautical name for the kitchen and fire place, to receive the breakfast for the rest. But what was our disappointment to find instead of coffee, which we were allowed by our own government at Melville prison, a piggin of *swill*, for we farmers' sons can give no other name to the disgusting mess they brought us. This breakfast was a pint of liquid which they call *Burgoo*, which is a kind of oatmeal gruel, about the consistence of the swill which our farmers give their hogs, and not a whit better in its quality. It is made of oatmeal, which we Americans very generally detest. Our people consider ground oats as only fit for cattle, and it is never eaten by the human species in the United States. It is said that this oatmeal porridge was introduced to the British prisons by the Scotch influence, and we think that none but hogs and Scotchmen ought to eat it.

A mess more repellant to a Yankee's stomach could not well be contrived. It is said, however, that the highlanders are very fond of it, and that the Scotch physicians extol it as a very wholesome and nutritious food, and very nicely calculated for the sedentary life of a prisoner: but by what we have heard, we are led to believe, that oatmeal is the staple commodity of Scotland, and that the highly favoured Scotch have the exclusive privilege of supplying the miserable creatures whom the fortune of war has thrown into the hands of the English, with this national dish, so delicious to Scotchmen, and so abhorrent to an American.

Excepting this pint of oatmeal porridge, we had nothing more to eat or drink until dinner time; when we were served with a pint of *pea-water*. Our allowance for the week, for it is difficult to calculate it by the day, was four and a half pounds of bread, two and a quarter pounds of beef or pork, one and a quarter pounds of flour, and the *pea-water*, which they called "*soup*," five days in every week. Now let any man of knowledge and observation judge, whether the portion of food here allotted to each man was sufficient to preserve him from the exquisite tortures of hunger; and perhaps there is no torture more intolerable to young men not yet arrived to their full growth. We had been guilty of no crime. We had been engaged in the service of our dear country, and deserved applause, and not torture. And be it forever remembered, that the Americans always feed their prisoners well, and treat them with humanity.

The *Regulus*, for that is the name of the ship we were in, is,



if I mistake not, an old line of battle ship, armed *en flute*, that is, her lower deck was fitted up with bunks, or births, so large as to contain six men in a birth. The only passages for light or air were through the main and fore hatches, which were covered with a grating, at which stood, day and night, a sentinel. The communication between our dungeon and the upper deck was only through the main hatch way, by means of a rope ladder, that could be easily cut away at a moment's warning, should the half starved American prisoners ever conclude to rise and take the ship, which the brave British tars seemed constantly apprehensive of. You may judge of their apprehensions by their extraordinary precautions—they had a large store of muskets in their tops to be ready for their marines and crew, should we Yankees drive them from the hull to seek safety above. They had two carronades loaded with grape and canister shot on the poop, pointing forward, with a man at each; and strict orders were given not to hold any conversation with the Americans, under the penalty of the severest chastisement. However improbable the thing may appear, we discussed the matter very seriously and repeatedly among ourselves, and compared the observations we made when on deck, in our council chamber under water. It seems that the British are apprized of the daring spirit of the Americans; they watch them with as much dread as if they were so many tigers.

Just before we sailed, our old friend, Mr. Miller, came on board, and we were all called upon deck to hear his last speech,

and receive his blessing. We conceived that he looked ashamed, and felt embarrassed. It is probable that the consciousness of having told us things that were not true, disconcerted him. He, however, in a milder manner and voice than usual, told us that we were going to England *to be exchanged*, while there were some in another ship going to England *to be hanged*. Beside this enviable difference in our situation, compared with those traitorous Irishmen, who had been fighting against their king and *country*, we were very fortunate in being the first selected to go, as we should of course, be the first to be exchanged and sent home. He told us that he thought it probable, that we should be sent home again before spring, or at farthest in the spring; he therefore exhorted us to be good boys during the passage, and behave well, and obey orders, and that would ensure us kind and humane treatment; but that if we were mutinous, or attempted to resist the authority of the officers, our treatment would be less kind, and we should lose our turn in the course of exchange, and that our comfort and happiness depended entirely on our own submissive behaviour. He every now and then gave force to his assertions, by pledging *his honor*, that what he said was true, and no deception.

As this was probably the last time we should have an opportunity of a personal communication with Mr. Agent Miller, we represented to him, that there were several of the prisoners destitute of comfortable clothing; that the clothes of some were not even decent to cover those parts of the body that even our

savage Indians conceal, and he promised to accommodate them: but we never heard any more of him or the clothing. However it may be accounted for, we saw this man part from us with regret. It seemed to be losing an old acquaintance, while we were going we knew not where—to meet we knew not what.

Previous to our sailing we had applied to *Mr. Mitchell*, the American agent, for a supply of clothing; but from some cause or other, he did not relieve the wants of our suffering companions. Mr. Mitchell may be a very good man; but every good man is not fit for every station. We had rather see old age, or decrepitude, pensioned by the government we support, than employed in stations that require high health and activity. Disease and infirmity may check, or impede the benevolent views of our government, and cast an odium on the officers of administration. After all, we may find fault where we ought to praise. It is possible that we may not have made due allowance for Mr. Miller, the British agent, and we may sometimes have denounced him in terms of bitterness, when he did not deserve it. His general conduct, however, we could not mistake.

On the third of September, 1813, we sailed from Halifax in company with the *Melpomene*, a man of war transport, armed en flute. On board this ship were a number of Irishmen, who had enlisted in our regiments, and were captured in Upper Canada, fighting under the colours of the United States of America! or, in the language of the English government, found fighting against their king and *country*. The condition of these Irishmen was

truly pitiable. Unable to live in their own oppressed country, they, in imitation of our forefathers, left their native land to enjoy the liberty, and the fruits of their labor in another. They abandoned Ireland, where they were oppressed, and chose this country, where they were protected and kindly treated. Many of them had married in America, and considered it their home. Here they chose to live, and here they wished to die. As few of them had trades, they got their living as laborers, or as seamen. The embargoes and the war threw them out of business, and many of them enlisted in our army; that is, in the army of the country which they had chosen, and had a right to choose. Their consciences forbade them not to fight for us against the English and their allies the Indians. In their eyes, and in the eye of our laws, no imputation of crime could be attached to their conduct; yet were these men seized from among other prisoners, taken in battle, and sent together in one ship, as traitors and rebels to *their country*. We fled from our native land, said these unfortunate men, to avoid the tyranny and oppression of our British task-masters, and the same tyrannical hand has seized us here, and sent us back to be tried, and perhaps executed as rebels. Beside the privations, hunger and miseries that we endured, these poor Irishmen had before their eyes, the apprehension of a violent and ignominious death. While we talked among ourselves of the hard fate of these brave Hibernians, we were ashamed to lament our own.

I cannot help remarking here, that the plan of retaliation

determined by President Madison, merits the respect and gratitude of the present and future generations of men. It was this energetic step that saved the lives, and insured the usual treatment of ordinary prisoners of war to these American soldiers of Irish birth. This firm determination of the American executive arrested the bloody hand of the British. They remembered Major *Andre*, and they recollected Sir *James Asgill*, under the administration of the great Washington, and they trembled for the fate of their own officers. May eternal blessings here, and hereafter, be the reward of Madison, for his righteous intention of retaliating on the enemy any public punishment that should be executed on these American soldiers, of Irish origin. While we feel gratitude and respect to the head of the nation for his scheme of retaliation, we cannot suppress our feelings of disgust towards the faction in our own country, who justified the British government in their conduct towards these few Irishmen, and condemned our own for protecting them from an ignominious death. I speak it with shame for my country—the ablest writers of the oppositionists, and the oldest and most celebrated ministers of religion, employed their venal pens and voices to condemn Mr. *Madison*, and to justify the British doctrine. This is a deep stain on the character of our clergy; and the subsequent conduct of the British, may serve to shew these ever meddling men, that our enemies despised them, and respected Madison.

Our voyage across the Atlantic afforded but few incidents for remark. Every day brought the same distressed sensations,

and every night the same doleful feelings, arising from darkness, stench, increased debility and disease. The general and most distressing in the catalogue of our miseries was the almost unceasing torment of hunger. Many of us would have gladly partaken with our father's hogs, in their hog-troughs. This barbarous system of starvation reduced several of our hale and hearty young men to mere skeletons. What with the allowance of the enemy, and the allowance from our own government, in which was good hot coffee for breakfast, we were generally robust and hearty at Melville Island. Some of our companions might well be called fine looking fellows, when we came first on board the *Regulus*; but before we arrived on the coast of England, they were so reduced and weakened, that they tottered as they walked. It was the opinion of us all, that one young man absolutely died for want of sufficient food! Yes! Christian Reader, a young American, who was carried on board the *Regulus* man of war transport, perished for want of sufficient to eat. In this insufficiency of food, complaint was made to the captain of the *Regulus*, but it produced no increase of the scanty allowance; and had the common sailors possessed no more humanity than their officers, we might all have perished with hunger. You who never felt the agonizing torture of hunger can have no idea of our misery. The study of my profession had acquainted me, that when the stomach is empty and contracted to a certain degree, that it, in a measure, acts upon itself, and draws all the neighbouring organs into sympathy with its distress:

this increases to an agony that ends in distraction; for it is well known that those who are starved to death, die raving distracted! Some of us in the course of this horrid voyage could have eaten a puppy or kitten, could we have laid hands upon either.

The manner in which the English generally treat their *poor* in their work-houses, in England, is infinitely worse than the treatment of our convicts in our state prisons. There are no very heavy chains, huge blocks, or iron stanchions in our prisons, as there are in the receptacles of the poor in England. We treat them with tenderness, as unfortunate fellow creatures, and not with harshness, as criminals.

Our constitutions, mind and body united, were so constantly impressed and worried with the desire of eating, that the torment followed us in our sleep. We were constantly dreaming of tables finely spread with a plenty of all those good and savory things with which we used to be regaled at home, when we would wake smacking our lips, and groaning with disappointment. I pretend not to say that the allowance was insufficient to keep some men pretty comfortable; but it was not half enough for some others. It is well known in common life, that one man will eat three times as much as another. The quality of the bread served out to us on board the *Regulus*, was not fit and proper for any human being. It was old, and more like the powder of rotten wood than bread stuff; and to crown all, it was full of worms. Often have I seen our poor fellows viewing their daily allowance of bread, with mixed sensations of pain and pleasure; with smiles and tears; not being

able to determine whether they had best eat it all up at once, or eat it in small portions through the day. Some would devour all their bread at once, worms and all, while others would be eating small portions through the day. Some picked out the worms and threw them away; others eat them, saying, that they might as well eat the worm as his habitation. Some reasoned and debated a long time on the subject. Prejudice said, throw the nasty thing away, while gnawing hunger held his hand. Birds, said they, are nourished by eating worms; and if clean birds eat them, why may not man? Who feels any reluctance at eating of an oyster, with all its parts: and why not a worm?

One day while we were debating the subject, one of our jack tars set us a laughing, by crying out: "*Retaliation, by G—, these d—d worms eat us when we are dead, and so we will eat them first.*" This shews that misery can sometimes laugh. I have observed that a sailor has generally more laughter and good humour in him than is to be found among any other class of men. They have, beside, a greater share of compassion than the soldier. We had repeated instances of their generosity: for while the epauletted officers of this British ship treated us like brutes, the common sailors would now and then give us of their own allowance; but they took care not to let their officers know it.

The *Regulus* had brought British soldiers to America, and among the rags and filth left behind them were myriads of fleas. These were at first a source of vexation, but at length their destruction became an amusement. We could not, however,



overcome them; like the persecuted Christians of old times, when you killed one, twenty would seem to rise up in his place. Had I have known what I have since learnt and had been provided with the essential oil of pennyroyal, we should have conquered all these light troops in a few days. A few drops of this essential oil, dropped here and there upon the blankets infested with fleas, and they will abandon the garment. The effluvium of it destroys them.

Confined below, we knew little of what was going on upon deck; some of us, however, were more or less there every day. Nothing occurred worthy of notice during our passage to England, excepting the retaking of a brig captured a few hours before on the Grand Bank, by the frigate *President*, commodore Rodgers. From information obtained from the midshipman who commanded the prize, we learnt the course of the *President*, whereupon we altered ours to avoid being captured. A few hours after this we fell in with the *Bellerophon*, a British seventy-four, who went, from our information, in pursuit of the *President*. We could easily perceive that the fame of our frigates had inspired these masters of the ocean with a degree of respect bordering on dread. We overheard the sailors say that they had rather fall in with two French frigates than one American. We thought, or it might be conceit, that we were spoken to with more kindness at this time. I have certainly had occasion for remarking, that prosperity increases the insults and hard heartedness of the British; and that we never received so much humane attention

as when they apprehended an attack from us, as in the case of alarm at Halifax. I am more and more convinced that cowardice is the mother of cruelty. Were I to draw the picture of cruelty, I would paint him with a feminine faintness. The free and horrible use of the *halter* in London, is from *fear*. I was brought up, all my life, even until I left my father's house, and came off without calculation, or reflection on this wild adventure in a privateer, in the opinion that the English were an humane, generous, and magnanimous people, and that none but Turks, Frenchmen, and Algerines, were cruel; but my experience for three years past has corrected my false notions of this proud nation. If they do not impale men as the Algerines and Turks do, or roast a man as the Indians do, and as the Inquisitors do, they will leave him to starve, and linger out his miserable days in the hole of a ship, or in a prison, where the blessed air is changed into a poison, and where the articles given him to eat are far worse in quality than the swill with which the American farmer feeds his hogs. How can an officer, how can any man, holding in society the rank of a gentleman, sit down to his meal in his cabin, when he has a hundred of his fellow creatures, some of them brought up with delicacy and refinement, and with the feelings of gentlemen: I say, how can he sit composedly down to his dinner, while men, as good as himself, are suffering for want of food. There is in this conduct either a bold cruelty, or a stupidity and want of reflection, that does no honour to that officer, or to those who gave him his command.

It happened when some of us were allowed in our turn to be on deck, that we would lay hold and pull or belay a rope when needed. When we arrived at Portsmouth, which was the 5th of October, we were visited by the health officer; and when we again weighed anchor to go to the quarantine ground, the boatswain's mate came to tell us that it was the captain's order that we should tumble up and assist at the capstan. Accordingly three or four went to assist; but one of our veteran tars bid him go and tell his captain that hunger and labour were not friends, and never would go together; and that prisoners who subsisted three days in a week on *pea-water*, could only give him *pea-water* assistance. This speech raised the temper of the officer of the deck, who sent down some marines, who drove us all up. There was among us a Dutchman, who was very forward in complying with the officers' request; but being awkward and careless withall, he suffered himself to be jambed between the end of the capstan-bar and the side of the ship, which hurt him badly. Some of the prisoners collected round their wounded companion, when the officer of the deck ordered them to take the d—d blunderheaded fellow below, and let some American take his place; but after this expression of brutality towards the poor jambed up Dutchman, not a man would go near the capstan, so one of their own crew filled up the vacancy made by the wounded Hollander.

A Mr. S—, who had some office of distinction in Newfoundland, if I mistake not he was the first in command of that dreary island. This gentleman, who I think they called

general Smith, was passenger on board the *Regulus*. One day when I was upon deck, he asked me how many of the hundred prisoners could read and write. I told him that it was a rare thing to find a person, male or female, in New England, who could not write as well as read. Then, said he, New England must be covered with charity schools.—I replied, that we had no *charity* schools, or very few; at which he looked as if he thought I had uttered an absurdity. I then related in a few words our school system. I told him, that the primary condition or stipulation in the incorporation of every town in Massachusetts, and which was a "*sine qua non*" of every town, was a reserve of land, and a bond to maintain a school or schools, according to the number of inhabitants; that the teachers were supported by a tax, in the same way as we supported our clergy; that such schools were opened to *every* child, from the children of the first magistrate down to the children of the constable; and that there was no distinction, promotion or favour, but what arose from talent, industry and good behaviour. I told him that the children of the poorest people, generally went to school in the winter, while in the spring and summer they assisted their parents.

He walked about musing awhile, and then turning back, asked me if the clergy did not devote much of their time to the instruction of our youth—very seldom, sir—our young students of divinity, and theological candidates very often instruct youth; but when a gentleman is once ordained and settled as a parish minister, he never or very rarely keeps a

school. At which the general appeared surprised. I added that sometimes episcopal clergymen kept a school, but never the presbyterian, or congregational ministers. He asked why the latter could not keep school as well as the former; I told him, because they were expected to write their own sermons, at which he laughed. Besides, parochial visits consume much of their time, and when a congregation have stipulated with a minister to fill the pulpit, and preach two sermons a week, visit the sick and attend funerals, they think he can have not too much time for composing sermons. They moreover consider it derogatory to the honor of his flock to be obliged to keep a school—when I told him that our clergymen bent all their force to instructing youth in morality and religion, he said, then they attempt to raise a structure before they lay a foundation for it. He seemed very strenuous that our priests should be employed in the education of youth, as he conceived that hired school masters had not the pious zeal that the priest would have. I suspect said General S. that your ministers are too proud and too lazy. I perceived his idea was, that a school master, hired to undergo the drudgery of teaching boys, was too much of an *hireling* to fill up to the full the important duties of a teacher; but he judged of them by the numerous Scotch school masters here and there in Canada, Nova Scotia, the West India islands and every where else, teaching for money merely. He did not know that our New England school masters were men of character, and consequence. Some of our very first men in these United States, have been teachers of youth. At this present time some of the

sons of some of the first men in Massachusetts are village school masters; that is, they keep a school in the winter vacations of the University; and some of them for the first year after leaving college.

I was much pleased with the general; and have since learnt, that he was a very worthy and benevolent man; and that he had paid great attention to the education of youth in Newfoundland; and that it was, in a degree, his ruling passion.<sup>2</sup> I wish I had then known as much of our school system, and of our system of public education at our Universities, as I do now; for I might have gratified his benevolent disposition by the recital. The ignorance of English gentlemen of the people of America, and of their education, is indeed surprising as well as mortifying. By their treatment of us, it is evident they consider us a sort of white savages, with minds as uncultivated, and dispositions as ferocious as their own *allies*, with their tomahawks and scalping knives. After conversing with this worthy Englishman, about the education of the common people in America, I could not but say to myself, little do you, good sir, and your haughty, and unfeeling captain imagine, that there are those among the hundred miserable men whom you keep confined in the hold of your ship, like so many Gallipago turtles, and who you allow to suffer for *want of sufficient food*; little do you think that there are among them those who have sufficient learning to lay the whole

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<sup>2</sup> By what I have just seen in the newspapers, I have reason for believing that Nova Scotia is like to be blessed with this gentleman for a governor.

story of their sufferings before the American and English people; little do you imagine that the inhumane treatment of men every way as good as yourselves, is now recording, and will in due time be displayed to your mortification.

Our sailors, though half starved, confined and broken down by harsh treatment, always kept up the genuine Yankee character, which is that of being grateful and tractable by kind usage, but stern, inflexible and resentful at harsh treatment. One morning as the general and the captain of the *Regulus* were walking as usual on the quarter deck, one of our Yankee boys passed along the galley with his kid of "burgoo." He rested it on the edge of the hatch-way, while he was adjusting the rope ladder to descend with his "swill." The thing attracted the attention of the general, who asked the man, how many of his comrades eat of that quantity for their breakfast? "*Six Sir,*" said the man, "*but it is fit food only for hogs.*" This answer affronted the captain, who asked the man, in an angry tone, "*what part of America he came from?*" "near to Bunker Hill, Sir—if you ever heard of that place." They looked at each other and smiled, turned about and continued their walk. This is what the English call *impudence*. Give it what name you please, it is that *something* which will, one day, wrest the trident from the hands of Britannia, and place it with those who have more humanity, and more force of muscle, if not more cultivated powers of mind. There was a marine in the *Regulus*, who had been wounded on board the *Shannon* in the battle with the *Chesapeake*, who had a great antipathy to

the Americans, and was continually casting reflections on the Americans generally. He one day got into a high dispute with one of our men, which ended in blows. This man had served on board the *Constitution*, when she captured the *Guerriere* and afterwards the *Java*. After the two wranglers were separated, the marine complained to his officer, that he had been abused by one of the American prisoners, and it reaching the captain's ears, he ordered the American on the quarter deck, and inquired into the cause of the quarrel. When he had heard it all, he called the American sailor a d—d *coward* for striking a wounded man. "*I am no coward, Sir,*" said the high spirited Yankee; "*I was captain of a gun on board the Constitution when she captured the Guerriere, and afterwards when she took the Java. Had I been a coward I should not have been there.*" The captain called him an insolent *scoundrel*, and ordered him to his hole again. What the British naval commanders call insolence, is no more than the undaunted expression of their natural and habitual independence. When a British sailor is called by his captain, in an angry tone, on to the quarter-deck, he turns pale and trembles, like a thief before a country justice; but not so the American; he, if he be innocent, speaks his mind with a firm tone and steady countenance; and if he feels himself insulted, he is not afraid to deal in sarcasm. In the instances just mentioned, *Jonathan* knew full well that the very name of *Bunker Hill*, the *Guerriere*, and the *Java*, was a deep mortification to *John Bull*. Actuated by this sort of feeling, the steady Romans shook the world.



From this digression, let us return, and resume our Journal. We arrived off Portsmouth the fifth of October, 1813; and were visited by the health officer, and ordered to the Mother-bank, opposite that place, where vessels ride out their quarantine. The next day the ship was fumigated, and every exertion made by the officers to put her in a condition for inspection by the health-officer. Letters were fumigated by vinegar, or nitrous acid, before they were allowed to go out of the ship. Their attention was next turned to us, miserable prisoners. We were ordered to wash, and put on clean shirts. Being informed that many of us had not a second shirt to put on, the captain took down the names of such destitute men, but never supplied them with a single rag.

The prisoners were now as anxious to go on shore, and to know the extent of their misery, as the captain of the *Regulous* was to get rid of us. The most of us, therefore, joined heartily in the task of cleansing the ship, and in white-washing the lower deck, or the place we occupied. Some, either through laziness or resentment, refused to do any thing about it; but the rest of us said, that it was always customary in America, when we left a house, or a room we hired, to leave it clean, and it was ever deemed disreputable to leave an apartment dirty. The officers of the ship tried to make them, and began to threaten them, but they persisted in their refusal, and every attempt to force them was fruitless. I do not myself wonder that the British officers, so used to prompt and even servile obedience of their own men, were ready to knock some of our obstinate, saucy fellows, on the

head. This brings to my mind the concise but just observation of an English traveller through the United States of America. After saying that the inhabitants south of the Hudson were a mixed race of English, Irish, Scotch, Dutch, Germans and Swedes, among whom you could observe no precise national character; he adds, "but as to New-England, they are all true English; and there you see one uniform trait of national manners, habits and dispositions.—The people are hardy, industrious, humane, obliging, obstinate and brave. By kind and courteous usage, mixed with flattery, you can lead them, like so many children, almost as you please;" *but*, he adds, "*the devil from h—l, with fire in one hand, and faggots in the other, cannot drive them.*" Neither Cæsar, nor Tacitus ever drew a more true and concise character of the Gauls, or Germans, than this. Here is seen the transplanted Englishman, enjoying "*Indian freedom*," and therefore a little wilder than in his native soil of Albion; and yet it is surprising that a people, whose ancestors left England less than a century and a half ago, should be so little known to the present court and administration of Great Britain. Even the revolutionary war was not sufficient to teach *John Bull*, that his descendants had improved by transplantation, in all those qualities for which *stuffy John* most values himself. The present race of Englishmen are puffed up, and blinded by what they *have been*, while their descendants in America are proud of what they are, and what they know *they shall be*.

After the ship had been cleansed, fumigated and partially

white-washed, so as to be fit for the eye and nose of the health officer, she was examined by him, and *reported free from contagion!* Now I conceive this line of conduct not very reputable to the parties concerned. When we arrived off Portsmouth, our ship was filthy, and I believe contagious; we miserable prisoners, were *encrusted* with the nastiness common to such a place, as that into which we had been inhumanly crowded. It was the duty of the health officers and the surgeon of the *Regulus*, to have reported her condition when she first anchored; and not to have cleaned her up, and altered her condition for inspection. In the American service the captain, surgeon and health officer would have all been cashiered for such a dereliction of honour and duty. This is the way that the British board of admiralty, the transport board, the parliament, and the people are deceived, and their nation disgraced; and this corruption, which more or less pervades the whole transport service, will enervate and debase their boasted navy. We cannot suppose that the British board of admiralty, or the transport board would justify the cruel system of starvation practised on the brave Americans who were taken in Canada, and conveyed in their floating dungeons down the river St. Lawrence to Halifax. Some of these captains of transports deserve to be hanged for their barbarity to our men; and for the eternal hatred they have occasioned towards their own government in the hearts of the surviving Americans. We hope, for the honor of that country whence we derived our laws and sacred institutions, that this Journal will be read in England.

The Regulus was then removed to the anchoring place destined for men of war; and the same night, we were taken out, and put on board the *Malabar* store ship, where we found one hundred and fifty of our countrymen in her hold, with no other bed to sleep on but the stone ballast. Here were two hundred and fifty men, emaciated by a system of starvation cooped up in a small space, with only an aperture of about two feet square to admit the air, and with ballast stones for our beds! Although in harbor, we were not supplied with sufficient water to quench our thirst, nor with sufficient light to see our food, or each other, nor of sufficient air to breathe; and what aggravated the whole, was the stench of the place, owing to a diarrhoea with which several were affected. Our situation was indeed deplorable. Imagine yourself, Christian reader! *two hundred and fifty* men crammed into a place too small to contain one hundred with comfort, stifling for want of air, pushing and crowding each other, and exerting all their little remaining strength to push forward to the grated hatch-way to respire a little fresh air. The strongest obtained their wish, while the weakest were pushed back, and sometimes trampled under foot.

Out stretch'd he lies, and as he pants for breath,  
Receives at every gasp new draughts of death.

*Tasso.*

God of mercy, cried I, in my agony of distress, is this a sample of the English humanity we have heard and read so much of from

our school boy years to manhood? If they be a merciful nation, they belong to that class of nations "whose tender mercies are cruelty."

Representations were repeatedly made to the captain of the Malabar, of our distressed situation, as suffering extremely by heat and stagnant air; for only two of us were allowed to come upon deck at a time; but he answered that he had given orders for our safe treatment, and safe keeping; and he was determined not to lose his ship by too much lenity. In a word, we found the fellow's heart to be as hard as the bed we slept on. Soon after, however, our situation became so dangerous and alarming, that one of the marine corps informed the captain that if he wished to preserve us alive, he must speedily give us more air. If this did not move his compassion, it alarmed his fears; and he then gave orders to remove the after hatch, and iron bars fixed in its place, in order to prevent us from forcing our way up, and throwing him into the sea, a punishment he richly deserved. This alteration rendered the condition of our "*black hole*," more tolerable; it was nevertheless a very loathsome dungeon;—for our poor fellows were not allowed to go upon deck to relieve the calls of nature, but were compelled to appropriate one part of our residence to this dirty purpose. This, as may be supposed, rendered our confinement doubly disgusting, as well as unwholesome.

I do not recollect the name of the captain of the Malabar, and it may be as well that I do not; I only know that he was a Scotchman. It may be considered by some as illiberal to deal in

national reflections, I nevertheless cannot help remarking that I have received more ill-treatment from men of that nation than from individuals of any other; and this is the general impression of my countrymen. The poet tell us, that

"Cowards are cruel, but the brave  
Love mercy, and delight to save."<sup>3</sup>

The Scotch are brave soldiers, but we, Americans, have found them to be the most hard hearted and cruel people we have ever yet met with. Our soldiers as well as sailors make the same complaint, insomuch, that, "*cruel as a Scotchman*," has become a proverb in the United States.—The Scotch officers have been remarked for treating our officers, when in their power, with insolence, and expressions of contempt; more so than the English. It is said that a Scotch officer, who superintends the horrid whippings so common in British camps, is commonly observed to be more hard hearted than an English one. It is certain that they are generally preferred as negro-drivers in

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<sup>3</sup> The Emperor *Maurice* being, says *Montaigne*, advised by dreams and several prognostics, that one *Phoeas*, an obscure soldier, should kill him, questioned his son-in-law, Philip, who this *Phoeas* was, and what was his nature, qualities, and manners; and as soon as Philip, amongst other things, had told him that he was "*cowardly and timorous*," the Emperor immediately thence concluded that *he was cruel and a murderer*. What is it, says *Montaigne*, that makes tyrants so bloody? 'Tis the solicitude for their own safety, and their *faint* hearts can furnish them with no other means of securing themselves, than in exterminating those who may hurt them. See his Essay entitled, *Cowardice the Mother of Cruelty*.—Vol. 2d, chap. xxvii.

the West-India islands. It has been uniformly remarked that those Scotchmen who are settled on the Canada frontiers are remarkable for their bitterness towards our men in captivity.

We speak here of the *vagrant* Scotch, the fortune-hunters of the Caledonian tribe; at the same time we respect her philosophers and literary men, who appear to us to compose the first rank of writers. Without mentioning their Ossian, Thompson and Burns, we may enumerate their prose writers, such as Hume, and the present association of truly learned and acute men, who write the *Edinburgh Review*. A Scotchman may be allowed to show pride at the mention of this celebrated work. As it regards America, this northern constellation of talent, shines brightly in our eyes. The ancient Greeks, who once straggled about Rome and the Roman empire, were not fair specimens of the refined Athenians.

Our peasantry, settled around our own frontier, and around the shores of our lakes, have a notion that the Scotch Highlanders were, not long since, the same kind of wild, half-naked people compared with the true English, that the *Choctaws*, *Cherokees*, *Pottowatomies* and *Kickapoo Indians* are to the common inhabitants of these United States; and that less than an hundred years ago, these Scotchmen were in the habit of making the like scalping and tomahawking excursions upon the English farmer, that the North American savage makes upon the white people here. This is the general idea which our common people have of what Walter Scott calls "*the border wars*." Some

of them will tell you that the Scotch go half naked in their own country—wear a blanket, and kill their enemies, with a knife, just like Indians. They say their features differ from the English as much as theirs do from the Indian. In a word, they suppose the Scotch Highlanders to be a race who have been conquered by the English, who have taught them the use of fire arms, and civilized them, in a degree, so as to form them into regiments of soldiers, and this imperfect idea of the half savage *Sawney* will not soon be corrected; and we must say that the general conduct of this harsh and self-interested race towards our prisoners, will not expedite the period of correct ideas relative to the comparative condition of the Scotch and English. The Americans have imbibed no prejudice against the Irish, having found them a brave, generous, jovial set of fellows, full of fun, and full of good, kind feelings; the antipodes of Scotchmen, who, as it regards these qualities, are cold, rough and barren; like the land that gave them birth.

We moved from Portsmouth to the *Nore* or Noah, for I know not the meaning of the word, or how to spell it. The place so called is the mouth of the river Thames, which runs through the capital of the British nation. We were three days on our passage. Here we were transferred to several tenders in order to be transported to Chatham. We soon entered the *river Medway*, which rises in Sussex, and passes by Tunbridge, Maidstone and Rochester, in Kent; and is then divided into two branches, called the east and west passage. The chief entrance is the west; and is defended by a considerable fort, called *Sheerness*. In this river



lay a number of Russian men of war, detained here probably by way of pledge for the fidelity of the Emperor. What gives most celebrity to this river is *Chatham*, a naval station, where the English build and lay up their first rate men of war. It is but about thirty miles from London; or the distance of Newport, Rhode Island, from the town of Providence. We passed up to where the prison ships lay, after dark. The prospect appeared very pleasant, as the prison ships appeared to us illuminated. As we were all upon deck, we enjoyed the sight as we passed, and the commander of the tender appeared to partake of our pleasure. We were ordered on board the *Crown Prince* prison ship; and as our names were called over, we were marched along the deck between two rows of emaciated Frenchmen, who had drawn themselves up to review us. We then passed on to that part of the ship which was occupied by the Americans, who testified their curiosity at knowing all about us; and sticking to their national characteristic, put more questions to us in ten minutes, than we could well answer in as many hours. We passed the evening and the first part of the night in mutual communications; and we went to rest with more pleasure than for many a night before.

Our prison ship was moored in what they called *Gillingham reach*. We would here remark, that the river, and Thames, and Medway make, like all other rivers near to their outlets, many turnings or bendings; some forming a more obtuse, and some a more acute angle with their banks. This course of the river compels a vessel to *stretch* along in one direction, and then to

*stretch* along in a very different direction. What the English call *reaching*, we in America call *stretching*. Each of these different courses of the river they call "*reaches*." They have their *long reach* and their *short reach*, and a number of reaches, under local, or less obvious names. Some are named after some of their own pirates, which is here and there designated by a gibbet; a singular object, be sure, to greet the eye of a stranger on entering the grand watery avenue of the capital of the British empire. But there is no room for disputing concerning our tastes. The reach where our prison was moored was about three miles below Chatham; and is named from the village of Gillingham. Now whether *reach* or *stretch* be the most proper term for an effort to sail against the wind, is left to be settled by those reverend monopolizers of all the arts and sciences, the *London Reviewers*; who, by the way, and we mention it *pro bono publico*, would very much increase their stock of knowledge and usefulness, if they would depute a few missionaries, for their own reverend body, to pass and repass the Atlantic in a British transport, containing in its *black hole* an hundred or two of Yankee prisoners of war: We do wish that the *London Quarterly Reviewers* particularly would take a trip in the *Malabar*; it would, if they should be so fortunate as to survive the voyage, make them better judges of the character of the English nation, and of the American nation, and of that nearly lost tribe, the Caledonian nation.

There were thirteen prison ships beside our own, all ships of the line, and one hospital ship, moored near each other. They

were filled, principally, with Frenchmen, Danes and Italians. We found on our arrival *twelve hundred* Americans, chiefly men who had been *impressed* on board British men of war, and who had given themselves up, with a declaration that they would not fight against their own countrymen, and *they were sent here and confined*, without any distinction made between them and those who had been taken in arms. The injustice of the thing is glaring. During the night the prisoners were confined on the lower deck and on the main deck; but in the day time they were allowed the privilege of the "pound," so called, and the forecastle;—which was a comfortable arrangement compared with the *black holes* of the *Regulus* and *Malabar*. There were three officers on board our ship, a lieutenant, a sailing master, and a surgeon, together with sixty marines and a few invalids, or superannuated seamen to go in the boats. The whole were under the command of a commodore, while captain *Hutchinson*, agent for the prisoners of war, exercised a sort of control over the whole; but the butts and bounds of their jurisdiction I never knew. The commodore visited each of the prison ships every month, to hear and redress complaints, and to correct abuses, and to enforce wholesome regulations. All written communications, and all intercourse by letter passed through the hands of captain *Hutchinson*. If the letters contained nothing of evil tendency, they were suffered to pass; but if they contained any thing which the agent deemed improper, they were detained.

We found our situation materially altered for the better. Our

allowance of food was more consonant to humanity than at Halifax, much more to the villanous scheme of starvation on board the *Regulus*, and the still more execrable Malabar. Our allowance of food here was half a pound of beef and a gill of barley, one pound and a half of bread, for five days in the week, and one pound of cod fish, and one pound of potatoes, or one pound of smoked herring, the other two days; and porter and small beer were allowed to be sold to us.—Boats with garden vegetables visited the ship daily; so that we now lived in clover compared with our former hard fare and cruel treatment. Upon the whole, I believe that we fared as well as could be expected, all things considered; and had such fare as we could do very well with; not that we fared so well as the British prisoners fare in America. Rich as the English nation is, it cannot well afford to feed us as we feed the British prisoners; such is the difference in the two countries in point of cheap food. On thanksgiving days, and on Christmas days, and such like holy days, we, in America, used to treat these European prisoners with geese, turkies, and plumb pudding. Many of these fellows declared that they never in their lives sat down to a table to a roasted turkey, or even a roasted goose. It is a fact, that when the time approached for drafting the British prisoners in Boston harbor, to send to Halifax to exchange them for our own men, several of the *patriotic* Englishmen, and many Irishmen, ran away; and when taken showed as much chagrin as our men would have felt, had they attempted to desert and run home from Halifax prison, and had

been seized and brought back! This is a curious fact, and worthy the attention of the British politician. *An American, in England, pines to get home; while an Englishman and an Irishman longs to become an American citizen!* Ye wise men of England! the far famed England! the proud island whence we originally sprang, ponder well this fact; and confess that it will finally operate a great change in our respective countries; and that your thousand ships, your vast commerce, and your immense (factitious) riches cannot alter it. This inclination, or disposition, growing up in the hearts of that class of your subjects who are more disposed to follow the bent of their natural appetites than to cultivate patriotic opinions, will one day hoist our "*bits of striped bunting*" over those of your now predominating flag, and you long sighted politicians, see it as well as I do. The hard fare of your sailors and soldiers, the scoundrelism of *some* of your officers, especially those concerned in your provision departments; but above all, your *shocking cruel punishments* in your navy and in your army, have lessened their attachment to their native country. England has, from the beginning, blundered most wretchedly, for want of consulting the human heart, in preference to musty parchments; and the equally useless books on the law of nations. Believe me, ye great men of England, Scotland, Ireland and Berwick upon Tweed! that one chapter from the *Law of Human Nature*, is worth more than all your libraries on the *law of nations*. Beside, gentlemen, your situation is a new one. No nation was ever so situated and circumstanced as you are, with regard to us, your

descendants. The history of nations does not record its parallel. Why then have recourse to books, or maritime laws, or written precedents?—In the code of the law of nations, you stand in need of an entirely *New Chapter*. We Americans, we despised Americans, are accumulating, as fast as we well can, the materials for that chapter. Your government began to write this chapter in blood; and for two years past we co-operated with you in the same way. Nothing stands still within the great frame of nature. On every sublunary thing *mutability* is written. Nothing can arrest the destined course of republics and kingdoms.

**"Westward the course of empire  
takes its way."... *Dean Berkley***

It is singular that while the Englishman and Irishman are disposed to abandon their native countries to dwell with us in this new world, the Scotchman has rarely shown that inclination. No—*Sawney* is loyal, and talks as big of *his* king and his *country*, as would an English country squire, surrounded by his tenants, his horses, and his dogs. It is singular that the Laplander, and the inhabitant of Iceland, are as much attached to their frightful countries, as the inhabitant of Italy, France or England; and when avarice, and the thirst for a domineering command leads the Scotchman out of his native rocks and barren hills, and treeless country, he talks of it as a second paradise, and as the ancient Egyptians longed after their onions and garlicks, so these

half-dressed, raw-boned-mountaineers, talk in raptures of their country, of their bag-pipes, their singed sheep's head, and their "*haggiss*." The only way that I can think of, (by way of preventing the hearts blood of Old England from being drained off into America,) is to people Nova Scotia and Newfoundland with Scotchmen; where they can raise a few sheep, for *singing*, and for *haggiss*; and where they can wear their Gothic habit, and be indulged in the luxury of the bag-pipe, enjoy over again their native fogs, and howling storms, and think themselves at home. Nature seems to have fixed the great articles of food in Nova Scotia to fish and potatoes; this last article is of excellent quality in that country. Then let these strangers, these transplanted Scotchmen, these *hostes*, these antipodes to the Americans, man the British fleet; and fill up the ranks of their armies, and mutual antipathy will prevent the dreaded coalition.

But I hasten to return from these people to my prison ship. Among other conveniences, we had a sort of a shed erected over the hatch-way, on which to air our hammocks. This was grateful to us all, especially to those whose learning had taught them the salutiferous effects of a free circulation of the vital air. It is surprising, that after what the English philosophers have written concerning the properties of the atmospheric air; after what Boyle, Mayhew, Hales and *Priestly* have written on this subject: and after what they have learnt from the history of the *Calcutta black hole*; and after what *Howard* has taught them concerning prisons and hospitals, it is surprising that in 1813,

the commanders of national ships in the English service, should be allowed to thrust a crowd of men into those hideous *black holes*, situated in the bottom of their ships, far below the surface of the water. I have sometimes pleased myself with the hope that what is here written may contribute to the abolition of a practice so disgraceful to a nation; a nation which has the honor of first teaching mankind the true properties of the air; and of the philosophy of the healthy construction of prisons and hospitals; and one would suppose of healthy and convenient ships, for the prisoner, as well as for their own seamen.

Our situation, in the day time, was not unpleasant for prisoners of war. Confinement is disagreeable to all men, and very irksome to us, Yankees, who have rioted, as it were, from our infancy, in a sort of Indian freedom. Our situation was the most unpleasant during the night. It was the practice, every night at sun-set, to count the prisoners as they went down below; and then the hatch-ways were all barred down and locked, and the ladder of communication drawn up; and every other precaution that fear inspires, adopted, to prevent our escape, or our rising upon our prison keepers; for they never had half the apprehension of the French as of the Americans. They said the French were always busy in some little mechanical employment, or in gaming, or in playing the fool; but that the Americans seemed to be on the rack of invention to escape, or to elude some of the least agreeable of their regulations. In a word, they cared but little for the Frenchmen; but were in constant dread of the increasing



contrivance, and persevering efforts of us Americans. They had built around the sides of the ship, and little above the surface of the water, a stage, or flooring, on which the sentries walked during the whole night, singing out, every half hour, "*all's well.*" Beside these sentries marching around the ship, they had a floating-guard in boats, rowing around all the ships, during the live long night. Whenever these boats rowed past a sentinel, it was his duty to challenge them, and theirs to answer; and this was done to ascertain whether they were French or American boats, come to *surprise*, and carry by boarding, the Crown Prince! We used to laugh among ourselves at this ridiculous precaution. It must be remembered, that we were then up a small river, within thirty-two miles of *London*, and *three thousand* miles from our own country. However, "a burnt child dreads the fire," and an Englishman's fears may tell him, that what once happened, may happen again. About one hundred and fifty years ago, viz. in 1667, the Dutch sent one of their admirals up the river Medway, three miles above where we now lay, and singed the beard of *John Bull*. He has never entirely got over that fright, but turns pale and trembles ever since, at the sight, or name of a *republican*.

## CHAPTER III

Our prison ship contained a pretty well organized community. We were allowed to establish among ourselves an internal police for our own comfort and self government.—And here we adhered to the forms of our own adored constitution; for in place of making a King, Princes, Dukes, Earls, and Lords, we elected a President, and twelve Counsellors; who, having executive as well as legislative powers, we called *Committee men*. But instead of *four* years, they were to hold their offices but *four* weeks; at the end of which a new set was chosen, by the general votes of all the prisoners.

It was the duty of the President and his twelve counsellors, to make wholesome laws, and define crimes, and award punishments. We made laws and regulations respecting personal behaviour, and personal cleanliness; which last we enforced with particular care; for we had some lazy, lifeless, slack twisted, dirty fellows among us, that required attending to, like children. They were like hogs, whose delight it is to eat, sleep and wallow in the dirt, and never work.—We had, however, but very few of this low cast; and they were, in a great measure, pressed down by some chronical disorder. It was the duty of the President and the twelve committee men, or common council, to define, precisely, every act punishable by fine, whipping, or confinement in the *black hole*. I opposed, with all my might, this last mode of

punishment, as unequal, inhuman, and disgraceful to our national character. I contended that we, who had suffered so much, and complained so loud of the *black hole* of the Regulus, Malabar, and other floating dungeons, should reject, from an humane principle, this horrid mode of torment. I urged, as a medical man, that the punishment of a confined black hole, was a very unequal mode of punishment; for that some men of weak lungs and debilitated habit, might die under the effects of that which another man could bear without much distress. I maintained that it was wicked, a sin against human nature, to take a well man, put him in a place that should destroy his health, and, very possibly, shorten his days, by engrafting on him some incurable disorder. Some, on the other side, urged, that as we were in the power of the British, we should not be uncivil to them; and that our rejection of the punishment of the *black hole* might be construed into a reflection on the English government; so we suffered it to remain *in terrorem*, with a strong recommendation not to have recourse to it but in very extraordinary cases. This dispute plunged me deep into the philosophy of *crimes and punishments*; and I am convinced, on mature reflection, that we, in America, are as much too mild in our civil punishments, as the British are too severe. May not our extreme lenity in punishing theft and murder, lead, in time, to the adoption of the bloody code of England, with their horrid custom of hanging girls and boys for petty thefts? Is it not a fact, that several convicted murderers have escaped lately with their lives, from a too tender mercy,

which is cruelty? By what I have heard, I have inferred, that the Hollanders have drawn a just line between both.

We used to have our stated, as well as occasional courts. Beside a bench of judges, we had our orators, and expounders of our laws. It was amusing and interesting, to see a sailor, in his round short jacket, addressing the committee, or bench of judges, with a phiz as serious, and with lies as specious as any of our common lawyers in Connecticut.—They would argue, turn and twist, evade, retreat, back out, renew the attack, and dispute every inch of the ground, or rather the deck, with an address that astonished me. The surgeon of the ship said to me, one day, after listening to some of our native salt water pleaders, "these countrymen of yours are the most extraordinary men I ever met with. While you have such fellows as these, your country will never lose its liberty." I replied, that this turn for legislation arose from our being all taught to read and write.—"That alone, did not give them," said he, "this acuteness of understanding, and promptness of speech. It arises," said he, with great justness, "from fearless liberty."

I have already mentioned that we had Frenchmen in this prison-ship. Instead of occupying themselves with forming a constitution, and making a code of laws, and defining crimes, and adjusting punishments, and holding courts, and pleading for, and against the person arraigned, these Frenchmen had erected billiard tables, and *rowletts*, or wheels of fortune, not merely for their own amusement, but to allure the Americans to hazard their

money, which these Frenchmen seldom failed to win.

These Frenchmen exhibited a considerable portion of ingenuity, industry and patience, in their little manufactories of bone, of straw, and of hair. They would work incessantly, to get money, by selling these trifling wares; but many of them had a much more expeditious way of acquiring cash, and that was by gaming at the billiard tables and the wheels of fortune. Their skill and address at these, apparent, games of hazard, were far superior to the Americans. They seemed calculated for gamblers; their vivacity, their readiness, and their everlasting professions of friendship, were nicely adapted to inspire confidence in the unsuspecting American Jack-Tar; who has no legerdemain about him. Most of the prisoners were in the way of earning a little money; but almost all of them were deprived of it by the French gamblers. Our people stood no chance with them; but were commonly stripped of every cent, whenever they set out seriously to play with them. How often have I seen a Frenchman capering, and singing, and grinning, in consequence of his stripping one of our sailors of all his money? while our solemn Jack-Tar was either scratching his head, or trying to whistle, or else walking slowly off, with both hands stuck in his pocket, and looking like *John Bull*, after concluding a treaty of peace with *Louis Baboon*.

I admire the French, and wish their nation to possess and enjoy peace, liberty and happiness; but I cannot say that I love these French prisoners. Beside common sailors, there are several

officers of the rank of captains, lieutenants, and, I believe, midshipmen; and it is these that are the most adroit gamesters. We have all tried hard to respect them; but there is *something* in their conduct so much like swindling, that I hardly know what to say of them. When they knew that we had received money for the work we had been allowed to perform, they were very attentive, and complaisant, and flattering. Some had been, or pretended to have been, in America. They would come round and say, "*ah! Boston fine town, very pretty—Cape Cod fine town, very fine. Town of Rhode Island superb. Bristol-ferry very pretty. General Washington tres grand homme! General Madison brave homme!*" With these expressions, and broken English, they would accompany, with their monkey tricks, capering and grinning, and patting us on the shoulder, with "*the Americans are brave men—fight like Frenchmen:*" and by their insinuating manners, allure our men, once more, to their wheels of fortune and billiard tables; and as sure as they did, so sure did they strip them of *all* their money. I must either say nothing of these Frenchmen, officers and all; or else I must speak as I found them. I hope they were not a just sample of their whole nation; for these gentry would exercise every imposition, and even insinuate the thing that was not, the more easily to plunder us of our hard earned pittance of small change. Had they shown any generosity, like the British tar, I should have passed over their conduct in silence; but after they had stripped our men of every farthing, they would say to them—"Monsieur, you have

won all our money, now lend us a little change to get us some coffee and sugar, and we will pay you when we shall earn more." "Ah, Mon Ami," says Monsieur, shrugging up his shoulders, "I am sorry, very sorry, indeed; it is *le fortune du guerre*. If you have lost your money, you must win it back again; that is the fashion in my country—we no lend; that is not the fashion." I have observed that these Frenchmen are *fatalists*. Good luck, or ill luck is all *fate* with them. So of their national misfortunes; they shrug up their shoulders, and ascribe all to the inevitable decrees of fate. This is very different from the Americans, who ascribe every thing to prudence or imprudence, strength or weakness. Our men say, that if the game was wrestling, playing at ball, or foot-ball, or firing at a mark, or rowing, or running a race, they should be on fair ground with them.—Our fellows offered to institute this game with them; that there should be a strong canvass bag, with two pieces of cord four feet long; and the contest should be, for one man to put the other in the bag, with the liberty of first tying his hands, or his feet, or both if he chose. Here would be a contest of strength and hardihood, but not of cunning or legerdemain. But the Frenchmen all united in saying, "*No! No! No! It is not the fashion in our country to tie gentlemen up in sacks.*"

There were here some Danes, as well as Dutchmen. It is curious to observe their different looks and manners, which I can hardly believe to be owing, entirely, to the manner of bringing up. Here we see the thick skulled plodding Dane, making a wooden dish; or else some of the most ingenious making a very

clumsy ship: while others submitted to the dirtiest drudgery of the hulk, for money; and there we see a Dutchman, picking to pieces tarred ropes, which, when reduced to its original form of hemp, they call oakum; or else you see him lazily stowed away in some corner, with his pipe, surrounded with smoke, and "steeping his senses in forgetfulness;" while here and there, and every where, you find a lively singing Frenchman, working in hair; or carving out of a bone, a lady, a monkey, or the central figure of the crucifixion! Among the specimens of American ingenuity, I most admired their ships, which they built from eight inches to five feet long. Some of them were said by the navy officers, to be perfect, as regarded proportion, and exact, as it regarded the miniature representation of a merchantman, sloop of war, frigate, or ship of the line. By the specimens of ingenuity of these people, of different nations, you could discover their respective *ruling passions*.

Had not the French proved themselves to be a very brave people, I should have doubted it, by what I observed of them on board the prison-ship. They would scold, quarrel and fight, by slapping each other's chops with the flat hand, and cry like so many girls. I have often thought that one of our Yankees, with his iron fist, could, by one blow, send monsieur into his nonentity. Perhaps such a man as Napoleon Bonaparte, could make any nation courageous; but there is some difference between courage and bravery. I have been amused, amid captivity, on observing the volatile Frenchman singing, dancing, fencing, grinning and



gambling, while the American tar lifts his hardy front and weather beaten countenance, despising them all, but the dupe of them all; just about as much disposed to squander his money among girls and fiddlers, as the English sailor; but never so in love with it, as to study the arts, tricks and legerdemain to obtain it. I have, at times, wondered that the hard fisted Yankee did not revenge impositions on the skulls of some of these blue-skinned sons of the old continent. Is there not a country, where there is one series or chain of impositions, from the Pope downwards? There is no such thing in the United States. That is a country of laws; and their very sailors are all full of "rights" and "wrongs;" of "justice and injustice;" and of defining crimes, and ascertaining "the butts and bounds" of national and individual rights.

It was a pleasant circumstance, that I could now and then obtain some entertaining books. I had read most of *Dean Swift's* works, but had never met with his celebrated allegory of *John Bull*, until I found it on board this prison-ship. I read this little work with more delight than I can express. I had always heard the English nation, including kings, lords, commons, country squires, and merchants, called "*John Bull*," but I never before knew that the name originated from this piece of wit of Dean Swift's. Now I learnt, for the first time, that the English king, court and nation, taken collectively, were characterized under the name of *John Bull*; and that of France under the name of *Louis Baboon*; and that of the Dutch of *Nick Frog*; and that of Spain under *Lord Strut*; that the church of England was called

*John's mother*; the parliament his wife; and Scotland his poor, ill-treated, raw-boned, mangy *Sister Peg*. While I was shaking my sides at the comical characteristical painting of the witty Dean of St. Patrick, the Frenchmen would come around me to know what the book contained, which so much tickled my fancy; they thought it was an obscene book, and wished some one to translate it to them: but all they could get out of me was the words "*John Bull* and *Louis Baboon*!"

It is now the 30th of November, a month celebrated to a proverb in England, for its gloominess. We have had a troubled sky and foggy for several weeks past. The pleasant prospect of the surrounding shores has been obscured a great portion of this month. The countenances of our companions partake of our dismal atmosphere. It has even sobered our Frenchmen; they do not sing and caper as usual; nor do they swing their arms about, and talk with strong emphasis of every trifle. The thoughts of home obtrude upon us; and we feel as the poor Jews felt on the banks of the Euphrates, when their task-masters and prison-keepers insisted upon their singing a song. We all hung up our fiddles, as the Jews did their harps, and sat about, here and there, like barn-door fowls, when molting.

Our captivity on the banks of the river *Medway*, bordered with willows, brought to my mind the plaintive song of the children of Israel, in captivity on the banks of the river *Euphrates*, which psalm, among others, I used to sing with my mother and sisters, on Sunday evenings, when an innocent boy, and long before the

wild notion of rambling, from a comfortable and plentiful home, came into my head. It is the 137th Psalm, Tate and Brady's version.

When we our weary limbs to rest  
Sat down by proud Euphrates' stream,  
We wept, with doleful thoughts opprest,  
And *Salem* was our mournful theme.

Our harps, that, when with joy we sung,  
Were wont their tuneful parts to bear,  
With silent strings, neglected hung,  
On willow trees, that wither'd there.

Meanwhile our foes, who all conspir'd  
To triumph in our slavish wrongs,  
Music and mirth of us requir'd,  
"Come, sing us one of Zion's songs."

How shall we tune our voice to sing?  
Or touch our harps with skilful hands?  
Shall hymns of joy to God, our King,  
Be sung by slaves in foreign lands?

O, Salem! Our once happy seat,  
When I of thee forgetful prove,  
Let then my trembling hand forget  
The speaking strings with art to move!

If I, to mention thee, forbear,  
Eternal silence seize my tongue!  
Or if I sing one cheerful air,  
Till my *deliv'rance* is my song.

## CHAPTER IV

I come now to a delicate subject; and shall speak accordingly, with due caution; I mean the character and conduct of *Mr. Beasley*, the American Agent for prisoners. He resides in the city of London, thirty-two miles from this place. There have been loud and constant complaints made of his conduct towards his countrymen, suffering confinement at three thousand miles distance from all they hold most dear and valuable; and he but half a day's journey from us. Mr. Beasley knew that there were some thousands of his countrymen imprisoned in a foreign land for no crime; but for defending, and fighting under the American flag, that emblem of national independence, and sovereignty; if he reflected at all, he must have known these countrymen of his were, in general, thinking men; men who had homes, and "fire places."<sup>4</sup> He knew they had, some of them, fathers and mothers, wives and children, brothers and sisters, in the United States, who lived in houses that had "*fire places*," and that they had, in general, been brought up in more ease and plenty than the same class in England; he knew they were a people of strong affections to their relatives, and strong attachments to their

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<sup>4</sup> *Fire places* gave rank among the Romans. It was a privilege to be a Roman soldier, and in the best days of Rome no man was allowed to be in the ranks of their army, who had not a *fire place* in his house. In the reign prior to Queen Elizabeth, there were scarcely any beds, or brick fire places in the houses of the common people of London.

country; and he might have supposed that some of them had as good an education as himself; he must, or ought to have thought constantly that they were suffering imprisonment, deprivations and occasionally sickness in a foreign country, where he is specially commissioned, and placed to attend to their comforts, relieve, if practicable their wants, and to be the channel of communication between them and their families. The British commander, or commodore of all the prison ships in this river visited them all once a month; and paid good attention to all their wants.

When we first arrived here, we wrote in a respectful style to Mr. Beasly, as the Agent from our government for the prisoners in England. We glanced at our sufferings at Halifax; and stated our extreme sufferings on the passage to England, and until we arrived in the river Medway. We remarked that we expected that the government of the United States intended to treat her citizens in captivity in a foreign land all equally alike. We represented to him that we were, in general, destitute of clothing, and many conveniences, that a trifling sum of money would obtain; that we did not doubt the good will, and honorable intentions of our government; and that he doubtless knew of their kind intentions towards us all.—*But he never returned a word of answer.* We found that all those prisoners, who had been confined here at Chatham, from the commencement of the war, bore Mr. Beasly an inveterate hatred. They accuse him of an unfeeling neglect, and disregard to their pressing wants. They say he never visited

them but once; and that then his conduct gave more disgust, than his visit gave pleasure. "Where there is much smoke there must be some fire." The account they gave is this—that when he came on board, he seemed fearful that they would come too near him; he therefore requested that additional sentries might be placed on the gangways, to keep the prisoners from coming aft, on the quarter deck. He then sent for one of their number, said a few words to him relative to the prisoners; but not a word of information in answer to the questions repeatedly put to him; and of which we were all very anxious to hear. He acted as if he was afraid that any questions should be put to him; so that without waiting to hear a single complaint, and without waiting to examine into any thing respecting their situation, their health, or their wants, he hastily took his departure, amidst the hooting and hisses of his countrymen, as he passed over the side of the ship.

Written representations of the neglect of this (nominal) agent for us prisoners, were made to the government of the United States, which we sent by different conveyances; but whether they ever reached the person of the Secretary of State, we never knew. Several individuals among the prisoners wrote to Mr. Beasley for information on subjects in which their comfort and happiness were concerned, but received no answer. Once, indeed, a letter was received from his clerk, in an imperious style, announcing that no notice would be taken of any letters from individuals; (which was probably correct) but those only that were written by the committee collectively. The committee accordingly wrote;

but their letter was treated with the same silent neglect. This desertion of his countrymen, in their utmost need, excited an universal expression of disgust, if not resentment. Cut off from their own country, surrounded only by enemies, swindled by their neighbors, winter coming on, and no clothing proper for the approaching season, and the American agent for themselves and other prisoners, within three or four hours journey, and yet abandoned by him to the tender mercies of our declared enemies, it is no wonder that our prisoners detested, at length, the name of Beasley. We made every possible allowance for this gentleman; we said to each other, he may have no funds; he may have the will, but not the power to help us; his commission, and his directions may not extend so high as our expectations; still we could make no excuse for his not visiting us, and enquiring, and seeing for himself our real situation. He might have answered our letters; and encouraged us not to despair, but to hope for relief; he might have visited us as often as did the English Commodore, which was once in four weeks; but he should not have insulted our feelings, the only time he did visit us, and humble and mortify us in the view of the Frenchmen, who saw, and remarked that our agent considered us no more than so many hogs. The Emperor *Napoleon* has visited some of his hospitals in cog. has viewed the situation of the sick and wounded; examined their food, and eaten of their bread; and once threw a cup of wine in the face of a steward, because he thought it not good enough for the soldier; but—some of our agents are men of more consequence, in their



own eyes, than Napoleon!

During the war it was stated to our government that *six thousand two hundred and fifty-seven* seamen had been pressed and forcibly detained on board British ships of war.—Events have proved the correctness of this statement; and this slavery has been a subject of merriment, and a theme for ridicule among the "*federalists*." They say it makes no more difference to a sailor what ship he is on board, than it does to a hog what sty he is in. Others not quite so brutal, have said—"hush! it may be so; but we must bear it; England is mistress of the Ocean; and her existence depends on this practice of impressment; her naval power must be submitted to—give us, merchants, commerce, and these Jack Tars will take care of themselves; for it is not worth while to lose a profitable trade for the sake of a few ignorant sailors, who never had any rights; and who have neither liberty, property or homes, but what we merchants give to them."

The American Seamen on board the Crown Prince, were chiefly *men who had been impressed into the British Navy previous to the war*; but who, on hearing of the Declaration of War against Great Britain by the people of the United States, gave themselves up as prisoners of war; but instead of being directly exchanged, the English Government thought it proper to send them on board these prison ships to be retained there during the war; evidently to prevent them from entering into our own navy. It should be remembered that they were all citizens of the United States, sailing in merchant ships; and yet the merchants, at least

those of Boston, and the other New-England sea-ports, have, very generally, mocked the complaints of impressed seamen, and derided their representations, and have even denied the story of their impressment. Even the Governor of Massachusetts (Strong) has affected in his public speeches to the Legislature to represent this crying outrage, as the mere groundless clamor of a party opposed to his election? Whether groundless or not, I will venture to assert, that the names of many of the leading federalists in Massachusetts, and a few others will never be forgotten by the inhabitants of the prison ships at Chatham, at Halifax, and in the West Indies.

We are now at peace, and the tide of party has so far slackened, that we can tell the truth without the suspicion of political, or party designs. I shall relate only what I have collected from the men themselves, who were never in the way of reading our newspapers, or of hearing of the speeches of the *friends of the British in Congress*; or in our State Legislatures. I think I ought, however, here to premise, that my family were of that party in Massachusetts called *Federal*, that is, we voted for Governor Strong, and federal Senators and Representatives; our clergyman was also federal, and preached and *prayed* federally; and we read none but *federal* newspapers, and associated with none but *federalists*; of course we believed all that Governor Strong said, and approved all that our Senators and Representatives voted, and believed all that was printed in the Boston *federal* papers. The whole family, and myself with them, believed all

that Colonel Timothy Pickering had written about impressment of seamen, and about the weakness, and wickedness of the President and administration; we believed them all to be under the pay and influence of Bonaparte, who we knew was the first Lieutenant of Satan. We believed all that was said about "*Free trade and sailors' rights*," was all stuff and nonsense, brought forward by the Republicans, whom we called *Democrats* and *Jacobins*, to gull the people out of their liberty and property, in order to surrender both to the Tyrant of France. We believed entirely that the war was "unnecessary" and "wicked," and declared with no other design but to injure England and gratify France. We believed also that the whole of the administration, and every man of the Republican party, from Jefferson and Madison, down to our – was either fool or knave. If we did not believe that every republican was a scoundrel, we were sure and certain that every scoundrel was a republican. In some points our belief was as strong and as fixed as any in the papal dominions; for example—we maintained stiffly that Governor Strong, Lieut. Governor Phillips, H. G. Otis, and John Lowell and Francis Blake, Esqrs. were, for talents, knowledge, piety and virtue, the very first men in the United States, and ought to be at the head of the nation: or—to express it *all* in one word, as my sister once did, "*Federalism is the politics of a gentleman, and of a lady*; but *Republicanism is the low cant of the vulgar*; of such men as your Tom Jeffersons, Jim Madisons, and John Adams', and Col. Monroes."

With these expanded and enlightened ideas of men and things, did I, *Perigrinus Americanus*, quit my father's house ease and plenty, to make a short trip in a Privateer, more for a frolic than for any thing serious, being very little concerned whether I was taken or not, provided my capture would be the means of carrying me among the people whom I had long adored for their superior bravery, magnanimity, *religion*, knowledge, and justice; which opinions I had imbibed from their own writers, in verse and prose. Beside the federal newspapers, I had dipped into the posthumous works of Fisher Ames, enough to inspire me with adoration of England, abhorrence of France, and a contempt for my own country; or to express all in a fewer words, *I was a Federalist of the Boston stamp*

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