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Edited by James Stanier Clarke and John McArthur

Excerpt

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BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR
OF
CAPTAIN GEORGE MUNDY, C.B.

“Thou wert swift, O Morar, as a roe on the desert ; terrible as a meteor of fire. Thy wrath was as the storm. Thy sword in battle as lightning in the field. Many fell by thy arm ; they were consumed in the flames of thy wrath. But when thou didst return from war, how peaceful was thy brow. Thy face was like the sun after rain ; like the moon in the silence of the night, calm as the breast of the lake when the loud wind is laid.”—OSSIAN.

PATRIOTISM, constancy, fortitude, and intrepidity, are the distinguishing traits of the British navy ; qualities inseparable from that gallant profession ; but when these qualities are associated in an individual, with the gentler virtues of generosity and humanity, perfect urbanity of manners, and all the mild courtesies and accomplishments of the gentleman, the exhibition of such a character becomes almost a public duty. The following sketch, therefore, of the life and professional services of a distinguished officer now living, is presented to the public, in order that, by holding forth an example of existing and cotemporary excellence, it may serve as an honorable beacon to those youths who, on entering their profession, are in danger of being wrecked on the shoals of error, either from the baneful influence of prejudice, defective education, or evil example.

Doubtless the most beneficial effects result to youth, from recording the virtues and heroic deeds of the illustrious dead ; but, it is presumed, the biography of modern characters, and the illustration of their merits, may more immediately and directly interest the feelings, and influence the moral conduct of many novices in their profession, who are apt to imagine that it is more difficult to be great and good, and to acquire distinction in the present than in former times ; than which a more erroneous notion cannot exist, for they may be assured, that there is no period, and no situation, wherein a steady adherence to the duties of their profession, integrity of principle, patience in dangers, perseverance in difficulties, good judgment, humanity, and, above all, a just and honorable

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conduct towards their brother officers, will not lead to fair fame and honours, and to universal respect and esteem.

The following memoirs will furnish a striking application to the foregoing remarks.

Captain George Mundy is the third son of Edward Miller Mundy, Esq. of Shipley Hall, in Derbyshire, one of the representatives for that county, and of Frances, daughter of Godfrey Meynell, Esq. of Yeldersley, in the same county. He was born on the 3d March, 1777, and at an early age was sent to Eton School, where he remained until the year 1789, when he was removed to the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth; where having completed his studies, he was placed in his Majesty's frigate the *Blanche*, commanded by Captain Christopher Parker, father of the late Sir Peter Parker, Bart.* who fought so gallantly, and fell so gloriously in the late war with America. During the short period of his services under that excellent officer, Mr. Mundy experienced the most marked kindness and attention from him, of which he has ever retained the most grateful recollection.

The *Blanche* having sailed for the West Indies, touched at Madeira † and Teneriffe. At the latter place, from long exposure to fatigue and wet during an excursion up the country, Mr. Mundy contracted a severe illness, which had increased to such a degree by the time the *Blanche* arrived at Antigua, ‡ that his captain deemed it advisable to send him back to England without loss of time, and the *Perseus* being about to sail, he returned home in her.

His native air having re-established his health, he was appointed to the *Victory*, from whence he was removed into the *Juno* frigate, commanded by Captain Samuel Hood.§ It was under that inestimable officer, that our youth served, it may be said, the apprenticeship of his profession; and singular it would have been, if under the auspices of such a commander, he had not acquired

* For an account of this officer's death, *vide* vol. xxxv. p. 344; and funeral, vol. xxxiii. p. 372: and at vol. xxxvii. page 419, 420, are some admirable Latin and English Lines to his Memory, written by his Brother-in-law, Master R. C. Dallas, son of Sir George Dallas, Bart. aged only eleven years.

† Different Views of the Island of Madeira are given in vols. xx. p. 386; xxii. p. 213; and xxviii. p. 53.

‡ For a View of St. John's Harbour, Antigua, see N.C. vol. xi. p. 456.

§ *Vide* N.C. vol. xvii. p. 1, for a portrait and memoir of Sir Samuel Hood, with *fac-simile* of his writing before and after the loss of his arm.

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that intimate knowledge of his duties, and those qualities of intrepidity and firmness of mind, which so peculiarly marked the character of that much lamented officer.

Having cruised some time in the Bay of Biscay, the *Juno* joined Vice-admiral Lord Hood's * fleet, which on the breaking out of the French revolutionary war, proceeded to the Mediterranean, and she was employed, with some other frigates, to visit the ports of Genoa, Leghorn, and Naples, † and to give convoy from them to Smyrna.

While in Genoa, the crews of the British ships had a serious fracas with the crew of the French frigate *Modeste*, who came on shore in a state of complete intoxication, having been celebrating the horrid tenth of August, and attacked with their cutlasses the British tars, who, having no other arms than boat-hooks and stretchers, gave them a sound drubbing, killing two of them.

The squadron having visited Smyrna, and Malta, ‡ the *Juno* was detached from the latter place up the Adriatic to Ancona, where taking a convoy under her charge, she returned to Malta, and on the 3d of January, 1794, sailed for Toulon, § in the harbour of which place that memorable incident occurred, in which the character of the British seaman for cool intrepidity and dauntless bravery shone so conspicuous. For the particulars of this gallant affair, the reader is referred to Captain Hood's official letter, || which for manliness and energy of style cannot be surpassed, and which will ever prove a valuable record of English valour. After the above singular escape from Toulon, the *Juno* was employed in blockading Corsica until the siege of Fiorenzo, when she was ordered, in concert with the *Fortitude*, of 74 guns, to attack a martello tower, ¶ mounting only two guns; on which occasion they were repulsed with some loss on the part of the latter ship. This new and formidable mode of defence at once astonished and confounded our naval officers. The courage of our

* For memoir of Admiral Lord Hood, see vol. ii. p. 1; and at page 400 of vol. xi. will be found an excellently engraved portrait of his Lordship.

† See N.C. vol. x. p. 51, for VIEW of Naples Bay and Mount Vesuvius; and vol. xxvii. p. 324, for CHART of the Bay of Naples.

‡ In N.C. vol. viii. p. 121, is given a VIEW of Malta.

§ Vide vol. ii. pp. 297. 401, for a CHART and VIEW of Toulon.

|| Vide N.C. vol. p.

¶ For VIEW of a Martello Tower, see vol. xxii. p. 107.

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tars, however, was only increased by the resistance that was made. With incredible labour and perseverance they dragged cannon up the heights which commanded the forts and martello tower, and St. Fiorenzo surrendered. In all these operations, Mr. Mundy bore a constant share.

Soon after this, our officer followed Captain Hood into *L'Aigle* frigate, which was actively employed in assisting the besiegers of Bastia* and Calvi. In October, 1794, *L'Aigle* sailed for Leghorn to refit, and was employed, during the ten succeeding months, in cruising in the Archipelago, and protecting the Smyrna convoys.

Mr. Mundy having now completed the period of his services as midshipman, quitted his brave captain with unfeigned regret, and proceeded to St. Fiorenzo, where he was made lieutenant by Vice-admiral Sir John Jervis,† then commanding the fleet, into the *St. George*, Captain Peard, his commission bearing date 27th January, 1796. In this ship, which was engaged in the blockade of Toulon under Sir John Jervis, he continued until the month of July following, when he was removed into the *Blenheim*, Captain Frederick,‡ which ship, soon after this period, accompanied the fleet to Corsica, and assisted at the evacuation of that island. In the latter end of November, the fleet sailed to Gibraltar.

In December, the fleet sailed for Lisbon; and in the middle of January, Sir J. Jervis, having refitted his fleet, sailed from the Tagus, and early in February was joined by six ships of the line from England, a most welcome and seasonable reinforcement, as he had received information from every vessel he had spoken with for several days past, that the Spanish fleet was out, and within a few leagues of him.

On the morning of the 14th, the enemy were joyfully descried by the British fleet, and soon after that glorious action commenced, which terminated so triumphantly in favor of the latter, whose promptitude of action, skill, and intrepidity unexampled, prevailed over a foe confident in his strength, and in his immense

* See vol. ii. p. 68, for a View of Bastia.

† For portrait and memoir of Sir John Jervis, afterwards Earl St. Vincent, the reader is referred to vol. iv. p. 1.

‡ In vol. xxxvii. N.C. p. 265, is a biographical memoir of Captain, afterwards Rear-admiral Thomas Louisa Frederick.

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superiority of numbers. The *Blenheim* was amongst the ships most warmly engaged, as her list of killed and wounded sufficiently indicated; viz. 12 of the former, and 45 of the latter. At one period of the action, she had a four-decked enemy's ship on her larboard beam, a three-decker on her larboard quarter, and another on her larboard bow, with three two-deckers a-stern of them, constantly firing upon her.

The British fleet sailed to Lisbon to refit, when Captain Frederick returning to England on his promotion, Lieutenant Mundy was removed into the *Victory*, in which he served as fourth lieutenant until the latter end of July, when she was ordered home. He was immediately appointed to the *Goliath*, Captain Foley, and joined her on the night of the bombardment of Cadiz. The *Goliath* composed part of a squadron that was principally employed in blockading that port, which being relieved by the squadron under the command of Sir Roger Curtis,* sailed to join Sir Horatio Nelson's † squadron off Toulon. On their arrival off this port, they learnt that the grand Egyptian armament, under Buonaparte, had sailed from thence a few days before. Sir Horatio Nelson immediately proceeded in quest of them, and after a pursuit of most extraordinary diligence and perseverance, his unwearied labours were repaid, on the first of August, by the most glorious and decisive victory that ever was gained by the British navy. ‡

So many detailed and accurate accounts have already been published of this action, that it would be superfluous here to enter into particulars thereof. Suffice it to say, that the *Goliath* had the distinguished honor to lead into action, which she did in great style, and attacked her opponent, *Le Conquerant*, followed by the *Zealous*, Captain Hood, who nobly seconded her, attacking *Le Guerrier*, who soon struck her colours.

At the awful period of the blowing up of *L'Orient*, many of the enemy had struck, but the action continued with the remainder until three o'clock in the morning. At daylight the gallant

* A portrait and memoir of Sir Roger Curtis will be found in vol. vi. p. 261.

† See N. C. vol. iii. p. 157, for portrait and biographical memoir of Admiral Lord Viscount Nelson.

‡ See N. C. vol. i. pp. 43. 521, for an engraved View of the Action between the French and English fleets in Aboukir Bay; and also official and other accounts relative to the action.

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admiral found in his possession the whole of the ships which lay to the northward of L'Orient. Le Mercure and L'Heureux being observed a-ground, the Goliah and Theseus were ordered down to engage them, when they struck their colours. The Goliah suffered much in killed and wounded, and was so severely cut up in her sails and rigging, that when ordered to assist the Zealous in the pursuit which she had gallantly commenced of the two remaining French ships, Le Genereux, and Guillaume Tell,* she had not a single square sail to set.

Our readers will pardon us, if in this place we insert an extract from a publication of Mr. Coleridge, the intimate friend of Captain Ball, of the Alexander, detailing a very interesting incident relative to this action:—

“ In the plan of the battle of the Nile, it was Sir H. Nelson's design, that Captains Ball and Troubridge† should have led up the attack. The latter was stranded; and the former, by accident of the wind, could not bring his ship into the line of battle till some time after the engagement had become general. With his characteristic foresight and activity of (what may not be improperly called) practical imagination, he had made arrangements to meet every possible contingency. All the shrouds and sails of the ship not absolutely necessary for its immediate management, were thoroughly wetted, and so rolled up, that they were as hard, and as little inflammable, as so many solid cylinders of wood. Every sailor had his appropriate place and function, and a certain number were appointed as the firemen, whose sole duty it was to be on the watch if any part of the vessel should take fire, and to these men exclusively the charge of extinguishing it was committed. It was already dark when he brought his ship into action, and laid her alongside L'Orient.

“ One particular only I shall add to the known account of the memorable engagement between these two ships, and this I received from Sir Alexander Ball himself. He had previously made a combustible preparation, but which, from the nature of the engagement to be expected, he had purposed to reserve for the last emergency; but just at the time when, from several symptoms, he had every reason to believe that the enemy would soon strike to him, one of the lieutenants, without his knowledge, threw in the combustible matter, and this it was that occasioned the tremendous explosion of that vessel, which, with the deep silence and interruption of the

* See vol. iv. p. 235, for an engraved Plate representing Le Guillaume Tell, on the morning of her capture, in her escape from Malta.

† For biographical memoir and portrait of Admiral Sir Thomas Troubridge, Bart. see vol. xxiii. p. 1; and *Addenda* to the memoir, vol. xxxviii. p. 356.

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engagement that succeeded to it, has been justly deemed the sublimest war incident recorded in history. Yet the incident which followed, and which has not, I believe, been publicly made known, is scarcely less impressive, though its sublimity is of a different description. At the renewal of the battle, Captain Ball, though his ship was then on fire in three different places, laid her alongside a French eighty-four, and a second longer obstinate contest began. The firing on the part of the French ship having at length for some time slackened, and then altogether ceased, and yet no sign given of surrender, the senior lieutenant came to Captain Ball, and informed him that the hearts of his men were as good as ever, but that they were so completely exhausted, that they were scarcely capable of lifting an arm. He asked therefore whether, as the enemy had ceased firing, the men might be permitted to lie down by their guns for a short time. After some reflexion, Captain Ball acceded to the proposal, taking of course the proper precautions to rouse them again at the moment he thought requisite. Accordingly, with the exception of himself, his officers, and the appointed watch, the ship's crew lay down, each in the place to which he was stationed, and slept there twenty minutes. They were then roused, and started up (as Captain Ball expresses it) more like men out of an ambush than from sleep, so coinstantaneously did they all obey the summons. They recommenced their fire, and in a few minutes the enemy surrendered; and it was soon after discovered, that during that interval, and almost immediately after the French ship had first ceased firing, her crew had sunk down by their guns, and there slept, almost by the side, as it were, of their sleeping enemy."

To return to our narrative :—The admiral having sailed with part of his fleet to Naples, left the *Goliah*, and two other ships of the line, in the Bay of Aboukir, where their boats were employed in many active services against the armed vessels of the enemy, and in annoying his detachments proceeding to Alexandria. The *Goliah* soon after joined the admiral at Naples, and proceeded early in October to Malta, and commenced, in conjunction with some other ships of the line, under the command of Captain Ball, the blockade of that island. The Isle of Goza soon surrendered, but Malta did not capitulate till after a blockade of two years; it was starved into a surrender.

The *Goliah* had not been on this station more than two months, when Lieutenant Mundy received the gratifying intelligence that he had been appointed by Lord St. Vincent to the command of the *Transfer* brig, of 14 guns, which he joined in the month of February, 1799, off Cadiz, which was at that period blockaded

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by the fleet under the command of Lord Keith. During the whole time he commanded this small vessel, Captain Mundy was constantly engaged in operations of no small hazard and difficulty; this duty falling very heavy on him, on account of the great want of frigates and small craft in the British fleet. Early in March the *Transfer* sailed, under the orders of the *Majestic*, to cruise on the coast of Spain, between Malaga and Cape de Gatte. A few days after they fell in with a polacca French privateer, of the same force as the *Transfer*, and chased her into a small bay near the town of Salorna. Here she sheltered herself under a small circular fort of three long twenty-four pounders. The boats of the *Majestic* were sent in to destroy her, but were soon repulsed by the fort. The next morning the *Transfer* was signalled to cover the boats in the attack. Captain Mundy lost no time in fulfilling his orders, made sail into the bay, and notwithstanding the great disparity of force, anchored with a spring on his cable a breast of the fort. The boats boarded and set fire to the brig, fortunately without meeting the smallest resistance, the fort only firing one gun over the *Transfer*.

The *Transfer* rejoined the fleet off Cadiz * at the end of April, almost immediately after which, intelligence was received that the French fleet, of nineteen sail of the line, and several frigates, were close at hand, steering for Cadiz. Captain Mundy was ordered to look out to the westward, while the fleet got under weigh. The next morning the weather was thick and foggy, and when it cleared, the *Transfer* found herself within two miles of two French frigates, by whom she was nearly captured. The whole of the enemy's fleet appeared soon after. Lord Keith † immediately endeavoured to close with them, notwithstanding he found himself placed between two hostile fleets, superior in number. For three days, however, his attempts were baffled by continual gales of wind, his ships frequently drifting very close to the shore. At length the enemy was seen going round Trafalgar into the Straights, when the *Transfer* was despatched with the information to Lord St. Vincent, at Gibraltar. The fleet followed soon after,

* A VIEW of Cadiz from the southward is given in vol. xxiii. p. 45.

† See N.C. vol. x. p. 1, for portrait and memoir of Admiral Lord Keith.

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and Lord St. Vincent having hoisted his flag, sailed in quest of the enemy.

We shall be forgiven if we digress here for a moment, to relate an act of heroism truly characteristic of a British seaman. Admiral Frederick, the same officer who commanded the *Blenheim* in the battle of St. Vincent, was confined to his bed at Gibraltar, far gone in a consumption. Lord St. Vincent ordered him to be informed of the approach of the enemy, offering him a brig to convey him to Tetuan,* in order that he might, if he pleased, hoist his flag in the *Egmont*, which ship was watering there, little thinking, perhaps, that circumstanced as he was, he would accept his offer ; but Frederick, who had nobly done his duty on the 14th of February, would not shield himself under the plea of sickness when another day of combat appeared to be at hand. He caused himself to be carried on board the brig, and on the fleet coming through the Gut, he was put on board the *Princess Royal*, his own ship. As long as there were any hopes of coming to action, he kept his spirits up, and became, as it were, a new man : but when the painful signal flew, “ to give over the pursuit,” from that moment his manly spirit drooped, his artificial strength quickly fled, and fast withering like the autumnal leaf, he lived but to reach his native land.

On the 20th of May, the fleet, while in pursuit of the enemy, encountered a violent gale of wind, on which occasion the *Transfer* nearly foundered. Having repaired her damages at Port Mahon, she sailed with despatches for Lord Nelson to Naples, under whose orders she remained until the month of September, when Captain Mundy was despatched to Captain Troubridge, in Naples Bay. On the 26th of the same month was concluded that negotiation so honorable to the British navy, and her brave and persevering commander, surrendering, on the part of General Garnier, Rome, Civita Vecchia, &c. &c. and a large army of French, on condition that they should be sent by sea to France. All the public plunder made at Portici, Caserto, Naples, &c. &c. which had been conveyed to Rome, was placed in the hands of the Regent for the two Sicilies ; and in short the whole Roman State was freed from the Gallic yoke.

* For a VIEW of Tetuan, on the coast of Morocco, *vide* N.C. vol. x. p. 141.

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Captain Mundy arrived at Palermo with the important despatches on the first of October; and on this occasion perhaps he might not have been deemed too sanguine, had he calculated on the honor of being sent overland with the official reports to the British government, or on receiving some mark of distinction from the Sicilian monarch; but Captain Mundy was not formed of that pliant stuff that could bend the knee to the haughty Armida of those days, whose fascinations had so long, and so injuriously to his fame, held in magic thralldom England's illustrious Rinaldo; and who exercised at that period so unlimited a sway in the councils of that weak and voluptuous court.

The Transfer now sailed for Malta, where she was employed under the orders of the Marquis de Niga, Portuguese admiral, who was holding that island in blockade, and on the 20th of January, 1800, she was despatched to Alexandria with letters for Sir Sidney Smith, under which enterprising commander he served until the month of July, when receiving his commission as post captain, he sailed for England, and finding on his arrival that his commission was not confirmed, he was obliged to act for another captain in the Swan sloop for some months, when he was promoted into the Vengeance, 74, then fitting out for the Copenhagen expedition; but Captain Duff* superseding him, he was appointed to the Carysfort frigate, of which ship he took possession in May, 1802, and continued in command of her until October following, when he was appointed to the Hydra frigate, 38 guns.

It was about this period that Buonaparte was meditating his grand scheme of invasion; for which purpose, his whole thoughts appeared to have been bent in constructing gun-boats, and other armed vessels, in the different ports of France. Although these mighty preparations never gave the British government any serious alarm, it was at least thought necessary to keep a strict watch over the enemy's operations, and to endeavour to prevent the passage of their small convoys from one port to another. Accordingly a number of frigates were despatched to the French coast on this service. The station allotted to the Hydra was partly Havre, and the adjacent harbours, and partly that of Guernsey and Jer-

* For portrait and memoir of Captain George Duff, see N.C. vol. xv. p. 265.