

## ROYAL NAVAL BIOGRAPHY.

### POST-CAPTAINS OF 1809, *continued.*

#### CHARLES NAPIER, Esq.

*A Companion of the Most Honorable Military Order of the Bath.*

This officer was made a Lieutenant Nov. 30, 1805; and promoted to the rank of Commander Nov. 30, 1807. On the 17th July, 1808, we find him assisting in cutting out a Spanish merchant schooner, from under two batteries at the N. E. end of Porto Rico; which service was conducted by Lieutenant James Robertson, of the Fawn sloop \*, Captain Napier, then commanding the Pultusk brig, merely accompanying him in order to acquire a knowledge of the coast, and agreeing that whatever was done should be attributed to that gentleman. After capturing the schooner, they both landed, spiked the guns in one of the batteries, and rendered the carriages unserviceable.

Captain Napier was shortly afterwards appointed to the Recruit brig, of 18 guns; in which vessel he fought a smart action with the Diligente French corvette, of 22 guns and 140 men, Sept. 6, 1808. On this occasion, the Recruit had her main-mast shot away, many of her carronades dismantled, one man killed, and several persons, including her commander, wounded. The extent of the loss sustained by the enemy's ship has not been made public, but we must suppose it to have been very heavy, to excuse her captain for having fled from the field of battle after he had so effectually crippled his antagonist. Her stern-boat, filled with small-arm men, was cut away by the Recruit's last fire.

\* Now Commander James R. Walker.

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In the following year, Captain Napier assisted at the reduction of Martinique; and behaved with extraordinary gallantry during the pursuit of le d'Hautpoult and two other French seventy-fours, which had been sent from Europe expressly for the relief of that colony\*. His conduct on this occasion is thus officially noticed by Sir Alexander Cochrane :

“ The superiority of the enemy's sailing, left little chance for the Neptune getting up, unless some of the ships were disabled ; and if any accident had happened to the Pompée's masts, they must inevitably have all escaped : I therefore directed Captain Fahie to endeavour to cripple the sternmost ship, without bringing on the collected fire of the three, then in line a-breast. In this attempt he was most gallantly supported by Captain Napier, of H. M. sloop Recruit, who kept close up, although fired at from all their stern-chace guns, and did every thing that was possible to be done to cut away the enemy's masts and rigging, and continued on this service during the whole chase \* \* \* \* \*. Until their Lordships' pleasure is known, I have commissioned the prize, and appointed Captain Napier to the command of her, as a reward for his spirited conduct.”

Captain Napier's post commission was confirmed May 22, 1809, the very day on which Sir Alexander Cochrane's letter arrived at the Admiralty. During the remainder of the war with France, he successively commanded the Jason, Thames, and Euryalus frigates; the former at the Leeward Islands, and the two latter on the Mediterranean station. A very handsome service performed by the Thames, in conjunction with the Cephalus brig, is thus described by Captain Napier, in a letter addressed to the senior officer at Palermo :

“ *H. M. S. Thames, off Porto del Infrischì, July 21, 1811.*

“ Sir,—Captain Clifford, of the Cephalus, having the look-out off Palinuro, on the 20th instant, informed me by a Sicilian privateer, of a convoy of 26 sail attempting to gain that port, which he, with his usual activity, prevented them from doing, and compelled them to take shelter in Porto del Infrischì, off which place we arrived at 5 this evening. I immediately desired Captain Clifford to lead in and anchor, which service he performed in a most handsome style, and was closely followed by this ship, who soon silenced eleven gun-boats, and an armed felucca, carrying six long 18-pounders, two 12-pounder carronades, three brass and two iron 6-pounders, and” (upwards of) “ 280 men, moored across for the protection of fourteen

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\* See Vol. I, p. 717.

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merchant vessels" (laden with oil, potash, &c. \*), "and 36 spars for the line-of-battle ship and frigate at Naples, and under cover of a round tower; and the adjacent hills lined with musketeers from the merchantmen and peasantry. The marines were then landed under their Lieutenant, M<sup>c</sup> Adams, and got possession of the tower, performing the light infantry manœuvres in a very pretty style, taking an officer and 80 men prisoners, and driving the rest before them; the boats, at the same time, under Captain Clifford, took possession of the convoy, together with all the spars, except two which could not be got off: all of which were alongside, and the ship under weigh in less than two hours, without the loss of a man, and only the boatswain" (of the *Cephalus*) "and another man badly, and three of the brig's men, slightly, wounded: on entering the bay her sails and rigging were a good deal cut up. I hope it will not be thought presumptuous in me begging you will recommend Captain Clifford, and my first Lieutenant, Whiteway" (who accompanied the marines to the heights, and afterwards assisted in launching the merchant vessels) "to the commander-in-chief, particularly as this is the third convoy the former has discovered and contributed to destroy since his appointment to the *Cephalus* †; the latter has been likewise at the taking of two and destroying one since his joining the *Thames*. The whole of the officers and ship's company behaved in the most steady manner; which will ever reflect the greatest credit on my predecessor, Captain Waldegrave ‡, for the excellent discipline on board. Captain Clifford likewise speaks in the highest terms of his first Lieutenant, Richardson, officers, and crew. I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) "CHARLES NAPIER."

Rear-Admiral Charles Boyles, in his letter to Sir Edward Pellew, reporting the above exploit, expressed himself as follows:—

"The complete success of the above-mentioned instantaneous and brilliant attack on the enemy's convoy by the *Thames* and *Cephalus*, reflects much honor on the conduct and gallantry of Captains Napier and Clifford, their officers, and crews."

In Sept. 1811, the *Thames* was placed under the orders of Captain the Hon. Henry Duncan, then commanding the *Imperieuse* frigate, and whose successful proceedings on the coast of Calabria, in Oct. and Nov. following, have been fully detailed at p. 993 *et seq.* of Vol. II. Part II. The following is an extract of an official letter written by Major Edward Dar-

\* The armed felucca also had a cargo of oil.

† See Captain AUGUSTUS WILLIAM JAMES CLIFFORD, C. B.

‡ Now Lord Radstock.

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ley, of the 62d regiment, reporting the military operations at Palinuro, on the 1st and 2d of the latter month :

*“ Thames, at Sea, Nov. 8, 1811.*

“ It would be presumptuous on my part, Sir, in attempting to pass encomiums on the very superior judgment and heroic gallantry of the commandant, Captain Duncan, of H. M. S. Imperieuse, as also in the gallant manner of laying his ship alongside a strong battery and fortified tower, flanked by several gun-boats, which were shortly silenced by a powerful and well-directed fire, in conjunction with Captain Napier, of H. M. S. Thames, whereby the commandant was left in possession of the enemy’s flotilla, convoy, battery, and tower. I have also much gratification in stating, that Captain Napier, who did me the honor to accompany me on shore with a party of seamen and marines, contributed materially by his cool, judicious, and actively intrepid conduct, ably seconded by the gallantry of Lieutenant Travers, of H. M. S. Imperieuse, to surmount all difficulties in gaining the heights—in the face of an opposing and strongly posted numerous enemy, whom we had afterwards the satisfaction of dislodging and obliging to retreat, leaving us in full possession of the heights and telegraph tower.”

*“ To Major-General Heron, &c. &c. &c., Melazzo.”*

Sir Edward Pellew’s opinion of the exploit at Palinuro will be seen by reference to p. 995 of Vol. II. Part II.

In the spring of 1812, we find Captain Napier employed as senior officer on the coast of Calabria, and making the following report to Rear-Admiral Freemantle, whose reply we shall subjoin :

“ I this day (May 14), in company with the Pilot, attacked the port of Sapri, defended by a strong battery and tower, mounting two 32-pounders, with an officer and 38 men, which surrendered at discretion, after being battered for two hours within pistol-shot ; but in consequence of their gallant defence, I allowed them to march out with the honors of war. We found 28 large vessels on the beach, loaded with oil, some of them nearly a quarter of a mile in the country, all of which were launched, and the battery in ruins before sun-set. I owe much to the support I received from Captain” (John Toup) “Nicolas, who flanked the battery in a most judicious manner, and afterwards commanded the launching, assisted by my first Lieutenant, Alexander Campbell, an officer of six years’ standing, as well as Mr.” (Roger) “Langlands, acting master of the Pilot, who, by his able disposition of the marines, placed under his command (there being no officer of that corps on board); kept upwards of 200 armed peasantry in check, and had only one man wounded. The firing of both ships’ companies was superior to any thing I ever saw, and their conduct on shore was no less praise-worthy. Neither ship lost a man on board : our bowsprit wounded in three places is the only material injury we have suffered.

(Signed) “ CHARLES NAPIER.”

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*“ H. M. S. Milford, Palermo Bay, May 27, 1812.*

“ Sir,—In acknowledging the receipt of your letter of the 14th inst., relative to the capture of the 28 vessels at Sapri, I have much pleasure in conveying my sentiments of the zeal by which yourself and Captain Nicolas have been actuated, as well as the officers and men belonging to the Thames and Pilot. I am, &c.

(Signed)

“ T. F. FREEMANTLE.”

*“ To Captain Napier, H. M. S. Thames.”*

The capture of the island of Ponza, executed in a most masterly manner under the direction of Captain Napier, assisted by Captain William Mounsey, of the *Furieuse* frigate, is thus described by him, in a letter to Sir Robert Laurie, Bart., dated Feb. 27, 1813 :

“ Agreeable to your directions, I embarked Lieutenant-Colonel Coffin\*, and the second battalion of the 10th regiment, on the 16th instant, and arrived off Ponza on the 23rd, the harbour of which is about a quarter of a mile wide, with a mole at the extreme end of it, defended by four batteries and a tower, mounting ten 24 and 18-pounders, two 12-pounders, and two 9-inch mortars.

“ Colonel Coffin and myself agreed, that the shortest and the surest road to success was, by running both ships into the mole, and carrying the place by assault ; but the weather was unfavourable for such an attack until the morning of the 26th, when the ships bore up in close order with a fine breeze. The enemy were prepared for our reception, and opened their fire nearly half an hour before our guns could bear : the batteries were, however, passed with little injury, the ships engaging on both sides, and the *Thames* was anchored across the mole-head, the *Furieuse* bringing up a little astern of her. Colonel Coffin and the troops landed the same instant, and pushed for the height near a strong tower, into which the enemy had retreated, and their appearance, together with the severe fire from the ships, induced the governor to hoist a flag of truce, and agree to the proposed capitulation. I have much pleasure in informing you, that this service has been performed without the loss of a man in either profession : our being hulled three times, and the *Furieuse* twice, with sails and rigging a good deal cut, is the only damage sustained. The most perfect cordiality has subsisted between the two services ; and I am much indebted to Captain Mounsey for the excellent support he gave, and his quickness in following my motions. If the resistance had been greater,

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\* Lieutenant-Colonel Francis William Cashell commanded the 2d batt. of the 10th regt. ; but was placed under the orders of Lieutenant-Colonel John Pine Coffin, Deputy Quarter-Master-General of the British forces in Sicily.

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I have little doubt that we should have succeeded, particularly with such a storming party as Colonel Cashell's regiment, and such a leader as Colonel Coffin.

(Signed)

" CHARLES NAPIER."

We must here add, that the approach of the Thames and Furieuse was known at Ponza some time before their arrival; that six privateers and several merchant-vessels had consequently sailed previous to the attack; and that every preparation was made by the capitaine-commandant, Jean Baptiste Dumont, whose garrison consisted of full as many troops as the force under Lieutenant-Colonel Coffin. A more beautiful marine subject never presented itself to the imagination of a Pocock than the advance of the British to the attack: the troops being ordered below, both ships rapidly closed the mole, shortened sail, and anchored, with the coolness of a common manœuvre: the boats pulled so closely under the cliffs on which the batteries were constructed, as to elude their fire; and the battalion having landed in a small sandy bay, soon gained the heights in the rear of and above the enemy, who being then placed between two fires, immediately surrendered. The small but excellent harbour of Ponza had hitherto afforded a safe retreat to those marauders who annoyed the Sicilian trade, and was subsequently of great service to the British cruisers employed watching the enemy's increasing force at Naples.

The particulars of a successful service, in which Captain Napier was engaged shortly after his joining the Euryalus, are detailed in a public letter from Captain Edward Brace, of the Berwick 74, to Sir Edward Pellew, dated off Cavalacie, May 16, 1813. The following is a copy thereof:

" I beg leave to acquaint you, that through the judicious management of Captain Napier, the enemy's coasting trade to and from Toulon to the eastward, was, between the 10th and 15th instant, collected in Cavalacie road, to the number of upwards of 20 sail: judging that a proper object for attack, I made the necessary arrangements to carry the place; but the surf proved too great for the people to land until this morning, when the plan was carried into execution by the boats, commanded by Lieutenant" (Henry Johnston) " Sweedland, first of this ship, and the royal marines under Captain" (William T. J.) " Matthews, of that corps. Allow me to observe on the

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prompt manner in which this service was accomplished ; for scarce twenty minutes elapsed from their reaching the beach until the batteries were taken, and a fire opened from them on the retreating enemy. The French national xebec *la Fortune*, carrying 10 long 9-pounders and 4 swivels, with a crew of 95 men, tried to effect her escape ; but the *Euryalus* pushing close in, cut her off, and the enemy abandoned her, leaving her at anchor with a spring on the cable, under the fire of the frigate, forts, and a division of the boats, under Lieutenant" (Mark) "White, who boarded her in time to preserve her from blowing up or sinking, as the crew had fired a shot through her bottom, and left a train to the magazine. We found in the harbour twenty-two vessels of different descriptions" (chiefly laden with oil, corn, lemons, &c.), "which were either taken or destroyed ; those scuttled by the enemy were cleared by the *Euryalus*, which ship took an anchorage to protect the working party ; and through the great exertions of Captain Napier, the officers and men employed on that service, every thing was brought away worthy of notice.

"Having related my proceeding, permit me to call your attention to the officers and men who conducted this affair ; and if, in your judgment, any merit is attached to the transaction, I entreat you to bestow it on Captain Napier, the officers, seamen, and marines of both ships, whose united exertions so fully accomplished my wishes, that I have only to regret the loss of one man killed, and one missing. I shall only particularise Lieutenant Sweedland and Captain Matthews ; Lieutenant" (Alexander) "Sandilands, first of the *Euryalus* ; together with two young men, Mr. John Monk, of the *Berwick*, and Mr. Crawford, of the frigate.

(Signed)

"E. BRACE."

During the winter of 1813, the *Euryalus* was employed watching Toulon, under the orders of Captain Thomas Usher, whose heroic services we have recently described. Being blown to the eastward of the Hieres islands, in company with the *Undaunted*, Captain Napier discovered two ships and a schooner, standing towards Corsica, whereupon he made the signal for an enemy, and instantly crowded sail in pursuit. At sun-set the high land over Calvi was seen, and no doubt remained that the strangers were endeavouring to gain that port ; Captain Usher, however, not feeling justified in continuing the chase any longer, made the signal of recall ; but the haziness of the weather preventing Captain Napier from seeing it, the latter kept on, drove one of the fugitives ashore, and compelled the others to seek refuge under the land batteries : the former bilged on the rocks, and was afterwards ascertained to be the *Balaine*, French store ship, of

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22 guns and 120 men, from Toulon bound to Ajaccio. Her companions were a gaberre of 30 guns and 150 men, laden with stores; and a national schooner of the largest class. Captain Napier's subsequent visit to Marseilles, in company with Captain Ussher, is noticed at p. 356 *et seq.* of Supp. Part I.

In June, 1814, the *Euryalus* sailed from Gibraltar for Bermuda, in company with a squadron under the orders of Captain Andrew King, and a fleet of transports having on board part of the troops recently employed against Genoa. On her arrival at Bermuda, she was placed under the orders of Sir Alexander Cochrane, whom she shortly afterwards accompanied to the mouth of the Potowmac river. The laborious naval operations against Alexandria, in which she bore a very active part, are noticed at considerable length under the head of Sir James Alexander Gordon, who commanded the squadron employed on that brilliant service, and in whose official report we find the following mention made of her skilful and gallant commander :

“ To Captain Napier I owe more obligations than I have words to express. The *Euryalus* lost her bowsprit, the head of her foremast, and the heads of all her top-masts, in a tornado which she encountered on the 25th (Aug.), just as her sails were clewed up, whilst we were passing the flats of Maryland point; and yet, after twelve hours work on her refitment, she was again under weigh, and advanced up the river.”

During the subsequent operations against Baltimore, we find Captain Napier commanding a division of boats sent up the Ferry branch of the Patapsco river, for the purpose of causing a diversion favourable to the intended assault upon the enemy's entrenched camp at the opposite side of the city. The rain poured in torrents, and the night was so extremely dark that eleven out of twenty boats pulled, by mistake, directly for the harbour. Fortunately, the lights on shore discovered to the crews their perilous situation in time for them to retreat. The remainder, containing 128 officers, seamen, and marines, led by Captain Napier, passed up the Ferry branch to a considerable distance above fort M'Henry, and opened a heavy fire of rockets and shot upon the shore, at



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several parts of which they could have landed with ease, had the whole of their force been together. After having drawn down a considerable number of American troops, and thereby effected his object, Captain Napier returned to the squadron with the loss of only one man, who was mortally wounded when repassing fort M'Henry\*, the position of the boats being pointed out to the enemy by a rocket, which one of the officers imprudently caused to be fired. It is worthy of remark, that the British troops commenced their retreat from before Baltimore whilst Captain Napier was thus paving the way for the meditated attack.

Captain Napier was nominated a C. B. June 4, 1815; and the *Euryalus* paid off by him about the same period. He married the widow of Lieutenant Edward Elers, R. N.

*Agents.*—Messrs. Maude.

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 JOHN RICHARDS, Esq.

*A Knight of the Ottoman Order of the Crescent.*

ENTERED the navy in Oct. 1775, under the patronage of Captain (afterwards Sir Charles) Thompson; and was a midshipman on board the *Alcide* 74, commanded by that gallant officer, in the different actions with the Count de Grasse, off Martinique, the Chesapeake, and St. Kitt's; in 1781, and Jan. 1782 †. He also assisted at the defeat and capture of the same celebrated French Admiral, on the memorable 12th April, 1782 ‡.

The *Alcide* returned to England in June, 1783; and on the 15th of the following month Mr. Richards joined the *Triumph* 74, commanded by Captain Philip Affleck, and stationed as a guard-ship at Portsmouth, where he remained under that

\* Fort M'Henry is a strong work, defending the water approach to Baltimore, and situated about two miles from the city, upon the point of the peninsula that forms the south side of the harbour, which, at its entrance, is scarcely a quarter of a mile in width.

† See Vol. II. Part I. p. 62; and the notes at pp. 63—66.

‡ See Vol. I. p. 35 *et seq.*

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officer and his successor, Captain Jonathan Faulknor, until Feb. 28, 1786. During the Spanish armament we find him again serving with Captain Thompson, in the *Elephant* 74. His commission as a Lieutenant bears date Nov. 15, 1790.

On the 2d April, 1791, Lieutenant Richards was appointed to the *Barfleur* 98, bearing the flag of Rear-Admiral Faulknor; and after the breaking up of the fleet which had been equipped in consequence of the dispute with Russia, he appears to have successively joined the *Falcon* sloop, and *Assurance* 44; commanded by Captains James Bissett and V. C. Berkeley.

Under these officers, Lieutenant Richards was principally employed at the Leeward Islands, from whence he returned home first of the *Asia* 64, Captain John Brown, in the summer of 1794. During the previous operations against Martinique he served on shore, in the seamen's battery, with 100 of her crew under his command. The hardships which he suffered, in common with the other officers of the naval detachment, have been noticed in our memoir of Sir Charles Ogle—vol. 1, part I, note at p. 711. His subsequent appointments were to the *Fury* sloop, employed on Channel service; and, May 15, 1795, to the *Alfred* 74, fitting for a foreign station.

The *Alfred* formed part of the fleet that sailed from St. Helen's, under Rear-Admiral Christian, in Nov. 1795; and she was twice obliged to put back through stress of weather\*; the latter time dismantled. After refitting at Plymouth we find her placed under the orders of Vice-Admiral Cornwallis, with whom she finally took her departure for the West Indies, Feb. 29, 1796.

Early in the following month, the *Alfred* captured la Favorite French national ship, of 22 guns; and retook two of the convoy, which had been dispersed by a heavy gale in the latitude of Cape Finisterre †.

\* See p. 296 *et seq.* of Suppl. Part I.

† Vice-Admiral Cornwallis returned to Spithead on the 14th Mar., in consequence of his flag-ship having sustained much damage by running foul of the *Belisarius* transport.