

# THE LIBERALIST, AND WILMINGTON REPORTER.

"LOVE WORKETH NO ILL TO HIS NEIGHBOUR; THEREFORE LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW."—ST. PAUL.

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## EXTRACTS.

### SKETCH OF THE BATTLE OF ALGIERS.

BY AN OFFICER ENGAGED.

The *Leander*, fitted for the flag of Rear-Admiral Milne, was at Spit-head, in June, 1815, when Lord Exmouth arrived with a squadron from the Mediterranean, where a dispute had arisen between the Dey of Algiers and his Lordship, in consequence of a massacre that took place at Bona, on the persons of foreigners, then under the protection of the British flag.

When the particulars were made known to Government, Lord Exmouth was ordered to return to Algiers, and to demand, in the name of the Prince Regent, instant reparation for the insult offered to England.—The squadron being still on the war establishment, the crews were discharged, and another expedition was ordered to be equipped with all dispatch. The *Leander* instantly offered her services, and she soon had the satisfaction to hear, that they were graciously accepted, and never was greater joy expressed throughout her crew, than when her Captain (Chatham) announced the determination of the Admiralty, that she was to complete the war complement; an extra Lieutenant (Monk) was appointed, a rendezvous for volunteers opened on the Point at Portsmouth, and in ten days she was ready for sea, with 480 men on board.

Portsmouth, during this time, looked like itself in war. All sorts of persons came forward to enter; ploughmen, watermen, and a whole band of itinerant musicians, some were taken, raw as they seemed to be, and others were rejected; certain it is, however, that two-thirds of our volunteers never had been at sea before. A zeal now showed itself from the captain to the boy, seldom witnessed; duty, however incredible it may appear, actually became a pleasure, such was the excitement produced by the prospect of active service.

The flag of Rear-Admiral Milne was at length hoisted, and the *Leander* sailed for Plymouth, where she anchored in two days, and joined part of the squadron intended for the same service: the *Queen Charlotte*, bearing the flag of Lord Exmouth, soon appeared, and on the 25th of July, the expedition sailed from England with a fine easterly breeze. Now began the preparations for action; the people were exercised at the guns twice a day (Sunday excepted) blank cartridges were occasionally fired, and the Marines practised with ball of mark. Tubs were placed in different parts of the decks to hold an additional quantity of shot, double breechings fitted to the carronades, and spare breechings hung over each long gun; midshipman were stationed at the hatchway to preserve regularity in the supply of powder; preventer braces and toggles fitted to the lower yards, which were slung in chains; tucklines were fitted to the topsails to haul them snugly up, and casks were lashed along the decks with water to refresh the men.

The expedition arrived at Gibraltar in eleven days, when it was joined by a Dutch squadron of five frigates and a corvette, under the command of Vice-Admiral Von Capellan; five gun-boats were fitted out and manned by the ships of the line, and two transports were hired to attend with ammunition, &c. All lumber and bulkheads, were landed at the dock-yard; the ships were completed with water, and in all points ready for sea by the 13th of August. The Rear-Admiral shifted his flag into the *Impregnable*, and on the 14th the combined expedition sailed for Algiers. The *Leander* was ordered to take a transport in tow, and keep on the Admiral's weather-beam, and the dutchmen kept to windward of all. We were met by an easterly wind two days after leaving Gibraltar,

and on the third day we were joined by the *Prometheus*, from Algiers, whether she had been dispatched to bring away the British Consul; the Dey, however, was apprised of the expedition and detained him, as well as two boats crews of the *Prometheus*, but the Consul's wife and daughter escaped and got safely on board.

The foul wind prevented the squadron making much way, but the time was employed to advantage in constant exercise at the guns, and the men were brought as near to perfection as they could be; in handling them each man knew his own duty, as well as that of the captain of the gun; fireman, boarder, powder man, rammer, &c. Each took his turn to the several duties, and continued changing up to the 27th. A chain cable was brought through the starboard cabin window, on the main deck, and bent to the bower anchor forward, ready to bring the ship up by the stern, and a hempen cable in the same way on the other side; the flying jib-booms were rigged in, to allow the ships to anchor near each other round the mole; in short, every precaution which the most seaman like views could think of were taken to insure success: lastly, were the preparations of the surgeon, who had been long employed making conveniences for those who were doomed to require his assistance. Fearful as it was to see the lengths of bandages which he and his assistants were getting ready for wounded limbs, we could not but feel a satisfaction in the confidence which all justly placed in his skill and attention; for no man could, nor did with more success, exert himself, when the day of need arrived.

On Sunday the 25th of August, the expedition had a fine breeze, and made great progress with a flowing sheet; divine service was performed, and on that occasion, when offering up prayers to the Almighty, by many for the last time, at public worship, feelings of the most satisfactory nature originated, which can never be forgotten by those who felt them; they give a cool confidence when going into action, which the stranger to religious sentiments can never possess.

The coast of Africa was seen on Monday, and as the day dawned on Tuesday, the 27th, Algiers appeared about 10 miles off. The morning was beautifully fine, with a haze which foretold the coming heat as the morning advanced, the breeze failed us, but at nine o'clock we had neared the town to within about five miles; the long line of batteries were distinctly seen, with the red flag flying in all directions, and the masts of the shipping showed above the walls of the mole. The *Severn*, with a flag of truce flying, was detached with the terms of the Prince Regent, and this was a most anxious period, for we were in the dark as to the feelings of the Dey, whether the offered terms were such as he could consistently accept, or that left him no alternative but resistance. During this state of suspense, our people were as usual exercised at the guns, the boats hoisted out, and prepared for service by signal, and at noon we were ready for action.

The ship's company were piped to dinner, and one o'clock the Captain and officers sat down to theirs in the gun room, the principal dish of which was a substantial sea pie; wine was pledged in a bumper to a successful attack, and a general expression of hope for an unsuccessful negotiation. At this time, the officer of the watch reported to the Captain, that the Admiral had made the general telegraph "Are you ready?" Chatham immediately directed that our answer "ready" be shown, and at the same moment the like signal was flying at the mast-heads of the entire squadron.—The mess now broke up, each individual of it quietly making arrangements with the other in the event of accident, and we had scarcely reach-

ed the deck, when the signal to "bear up" was out, the Commander in chief leading the way, with a fine steady breeze blowing on the land. We ran in on the Admiral's larboard beam, keeping within too cable's length of him, the long guns were loaded with round and grape, the carronades with grape only; our sail was reduced to the topsails, and top gallant sails, the mainsail furlled, and the boats dropped astern in 1829. The ships were now steering to their appointed stations, and the gun boats showed their eagerness, by a crowd of sail, to get alongside the batteries.—As we drew towards the shore, the Algerines were observed loading their guns, and a vast number of spectators were assembled on the beach, idly gazing at the approach of the squadron, seemingly quite unconscious of what was about to happen. Far different were appearances at the mouth of the mole as it opened; the row-boats, fully manned, were lying on their oars, quite prepared for the attack, and we fully expected they would attempt to board should an opportunity offer; each boat had a flag hanging over the stern, a frigate was moored across the mouth of the mole, and a small brig was at anchor outside of her.

At fifteen minutes before three p.m. the *Queen Charlotte* came to an anchor by the stern, at the distance of sixty yards from the beach, and as was ascertained by measurement, ninety yards from the muzzles of the guns of the mole batteries, unmolested, and with all the quietude of a friendly harbour; her flag flew at the main, and the colours at the peak; her starboard broadside flanked the whole range of batteries from the molehead to the lighthouse; her topsail yards (as were those of the squadron) remained aloft, to be more secure from fire, and the sails brought snugly to the yards by headlines previously fitted; the top gallant sails and small sails only were furled, so that we had no man unnecessarily exposed aloft.

The *Leander*, following the motions of the Admiral, was brought up with two anchors by the stern, let go on his larboard beam, veered away, until she obtained a position nearly a-head of him, then let go an anchor under foot, open by this to a battery on the starboard side at the bottom of the mole, and to the Fish-market battery on the larboard side. At this moment Lord Exmouth was seen waving his hat on the poop to the idlers on the beach to get out of the way, then a loud cheer was heard, and the whole of the *Queen Charlotte's* tremendous broadside was thrown into the batteries abreast of her; this measure was promptly taken, as the smoke of a gun was observed to issue from some part of the enemy's works so that the sound of the British guns was heard almost in the same instant with that to which the smoke belonged. The cheers of the *Queen Charlotte* were loudly echoed by those of the *Leander*, and the contents of her starboard broadside as quickly followed, carrying destruction into the groups of row-boats; as the smoke opened, the fragments of boats were seen floating, their crews swimming and scrambling, as many as escaped the shot to the shore; another broadside annihilated them. The enemy was not slack in returning this warm salute, for almost before the shot escaped from our guns, a man standing on the fore-castle bits, hauling on the topsail buntlines, received a musket bullet in his left arm, which broke the bone, and commenced the labours in the cockpit. The action became general as soon as the ships had occupied their positions, and we were engaged with the batteries on either side, so close were we that the enemy were distinctly seen loading their guns above us. After a few broadsides, we brought our starboard broadside to bear on the Fish-market, and our larboard side then looked to seaward.—The rocket-boats were now throwing rockets over our ships into the mole, the effects of which, were occasionally seen on the shipping on our larboard bow. The Dutch flag was to be seen flying at the fore of the Dutch Admiral, who, with his squadron, were engaging the batteries to the eastward of the mole. The fresh breeze which brought us in was gradually driven away by the cannonade, and the smoke of our guns so hung about us, that we were obliged to wait until it cleared for the men took deliberate and certain aims, training their guns until they were fully satisfied of their precision. But our enemies gave us no reason to suppose that they were idle; so great was

the havoc which they made amongst us, that the surgeon in his report stated, that sixty-five men were brought to him wounded after the first and second broadsides. Poor Baxter, the subaltern of Marines, who had been presiding at the mess-table just half an hour before in all the vigour of health, was shot through his head by a musket bullet, while he was leaning on the hammock-rails, looking towards the shore. The Captain of Marines, (Wilson,) in a later stage of the business, fell by a double-headed shot, which carried away both his legs; the Marines were at the great guns so that their officers had but little to do, and no doubt Baxter was picked off. A very fine boy, Sturt, a Midshipman at the gangway quarters, came tumbling past severely wounded by a musket bullet likewise, and another Mid. Hanwell, at the same quarters, fell, shot in the spine in the same way.

About four o'clock, a boat with an officer, came with orders from the Admiral to cease firing, as an attempt to destroy the Algerine frigates was about to be made. Accordingly, three boats pushed into the mole, running the gauntlet in gallant style; they boarded the outermost frigate, which was found deserted by her crew, and in a few minutes she was in a blaze; in doing this the boats' crew suffered severely. The smoke of our last broadside had scarcely left us, when the Algerines renewed their fire, of musketry upon our decks, fortunately the men were lying down by the guns, and the officers, alone were marks for them, but one Midshipman was their only victim at this time. The masts began to suffer in all parts, splinters were falling from them, and shreds of canvass from the sails came down upon us in great quantities: traces, bow-lines, and other running gear, suffered equally; the shrouds fore and aft, got cut up so quickly, that the rigging men attempted in vain to knot them, and were at last forced to leave the rigging to its fate.

When the boats returned, we recommenced our fire with renewed vigour; occasionally a flag staff was knocked down, a fact which was always announced with a cheer, each captain of a gun believing himself to be the faithful marksman. The Algerine squadron now began as it were, to follow the motions of the outer frigate; the rockets had taken effect, and they all burned merrily together. A hot shot about this time struck a powder-box, on which was sitting the powder-boy, he poor fellow, was blown up, and another near him was dreadfully scorched.

Through the intervals of smoke, the sad devastation in the enemy's works was made visible; the whole of the mole head, near the *Queen Charlotte*, was a ruin, and the guns were consequently silenced; but we were not so fortunate with the Fish-market; the guns there still annoyed us, and ours seemed to make no impression. A battery in the upper angle of the town was also untouched, and we were so much under it, that the shot actually came through our decks, without touching the bulwarks, and we could not elevate our guns sufficiently to check them. As the sun was sitting behind the town, the whole of the shipping in the mole were in flames; their cables burned through, left them at the mercy of every breeze: the outermost frigate threatened the *Queen Charlotte* with a similar fate, but a breeze sent her clear on towards the *Leander*; a most intense heat came from her, and we expected every moment to be in contact; the flames were burning with great power at the mast heads, and the loose fire was flying about in such a way that there seemed to be little chance of our escaping, but we checked her progress towards us, by firing into her, and in the act of hauling out, we were rejoiced to see a welcome sea-breeze alter the direction of the flames aloft, the same breeze soon reached her hull, and we had the satisfaction in a few minutes to see her touch the shore to which she belonged.

The guns were now so much heated by the incessant fire kept up that we were forced to reduce the cartridges nearly one-half, as well as to wait their cooling before reloading; the men, too, were so reduced at some guns, that they required the assistance of the others to work them; the aftermost gun on the gangway had only too men untouched. Between seven and eight o'clock, the fire of the enemy's guns had sensibly diminished, and their people were running in crowds from the demolished works to the great gate of the city; they were distinctly seen in all their movements by the light of their burning navy and arsenal. The battery in the upper angle of the town, which was too high to fire upon, kept up a galling fire, and another farther to the eastward was still at work. To bring our broadside to bear on it, a hawser was run out to the *Severn*, on our larboard bow, the ship was swung to the proper bearing, & we soon checked them. At 45 minutes past nine, the squadron began to haul out, some making sail and taking advantage of a light air off the land, while others were towing and warping; the only sail which we had fit to set, was the main-topmast stay-sail, and this was of too stout

canvass to feel the breeze; the boats of our own ship were unable to move her, after a kedge-anchor, which was run out to the length of the stream-cable, had come home; thus we were left dependent either on a breeze or the assistance of the squadron.—An officer was sent to tell the Admiral our situation; but the boat was sunk from under the crew, who were picked up by another; a second boat was more successful, and the Admiral ordered all the boats he could collect to our assistance. At this time the *Severn*, near us, had caught the breeze and was moving steadily out; a hawser was made fast to her mizen chains, secured to its base end, which had just sufficient length to reach the painter of the head-most boat, towing; by this means the *Leander's* head was checked round, and we had again the gratification to see her following the others of the squadron. The small portion of our sails were set to assist our progress, but without the help of the *Severn* there would have remained; our mizen-topmast fell into the main-top, shot through. When the Algerines saw us retreating they returned to the guns which they had previously abandoned, and again commenced a fire on the boats which made the water literally in a foam; this fire was returned by our quarter guns, but with very little effect. As we left the land, the breeze increased, the *Severn* cast off her tow, and our boats returned on board: at 25 minutes past eleven we fired our last gun, and the cannonade was succeeded by a storm of thunder and lightning.

At midnight we anchored within three miles of the scene of action; the report of a gun was on shore still heard at intervals, but all was soon quiet, except the shipping in the mole, which continued to burn keeping all around brilliantly illuminated. We now attempted to furl sails, but the men were so thoroughly stiffened by the short period of inaction since the firing ceased, that they stuck almost powerless to the yards; and the labours of the day ended; grog was served out, and the hammocks piped down, but few had the inclination to hang them up.

Soon after daylight we mustered at quarters, and found that 16 officers and men were killed, and 120 wounded; the three lower masts badly wounded, every spar wounded, except the spanker-boom; the shrouds cut in all parts, leaving the masts unsupported, which would have fallen had there been the least motion; the running gear entirely cut to pieces; the boats all shot through, the bulwarks riddled with grape and musketry; 90 round shot in the starboard side, some of them between wind and water; the guns were all uninjured to any extent, and remained the only part of the *Leander*, efficient.

At nine o'clock Capt. Mitchell came on board from Lord Exmouth, to thank Capt. Chatham for the position taken by the *Leander*, and for the able supports she had given him throughout the day.

The Town had a very different appearance this morning to that which it presented the day before. Instead of clean white walls, decorated with flags, and a mole well filled with shipping, there was but the ruins of a town; a few houses in the upper part remained untouched, but lower down it was one undistinguishable mass; smoke rising from the fragments of the ships destroyed was seen in many directions and the wrecks of boats and larger vessels were drifting about unclaimed by either party.

The ship's company were again at work, clearing deck, unbending sails, and making every preparation to renew the action; but at noon we had the satisfaction to hear that the Dey had accepted the terms which were offered to him the day before at the same time that this information was conveyed to the squadron, a general order was issued to offer up public thanksgiving to Almighty God for the signal victory obtained by the arms of England.

On this day the bodies of our departed shipmates, were ranged on gratings along the upper deck for interment; the captain read the funeral services in the presence of the whole crew assembled round, and when he came to the passage, "we commit their bodies to the deep," the remains of officers and men were launched into the ocean, within three miles of the spot where they met their fate. The wounded were made as comfortable as a ship could make them; they were placed in cots, hung up on the main-deck, occupying the whole space between the main mast and the cabin windows, and they received from the officers all the fresh stock which they possessed.

On the 31st of August, Adm. Milne re-hoisted his flag in the *Leander*, and sailed the following day for England with despatches; but her passage to Gibraltar was so tedious, on account of her being under jury-topmasts and yards, that he shifted his flag to the *Glasgow*, and proceeded in her, leaving us to make the best of our way.—At the end of September we arrived at Spit-head.—*Albion*