

BIOGRAPHY.

From the *Atlantic Magazine*.

CAPTAIN JACOB JONES

Of the United States Navy.

Was born about the year 1770, near the village of Smyrna, in the county of Kent, state of Delaware. His father was an independent and respectable farmer, of excellent moral and religious character. His mother was of a good family of the name of Jones; an amiable and interesting woman; she died when the subject of this memoir was yet an infant. Between two and three years afterwards his father married again, with a Miss Holt, granddaughter of the honorable Ryers H. H. formerly chief justice of the supreme court of Delaware; or, as it was then designated, "The lower counties on Delaware." Shortly after this second marriage his father died, when this his only child was scarcely four years of age. It was the good fortune of our hero to be left under the care of a stepmother, who had all the kind feelings of a natural parent. The affection which this excellent woman had borne towards the father, was, on his death, transferred to the child. He became nurtured from infancy to manhood, with a truly maternal care and tenderness. At an early age, he was placed at school, and his proficiency in learning was equal to her most anxious wishes. After becoming well acquainted with the general branches of an English education, he was transferred to a grammar school at Lewes in Sussex county, conducted by the learned and pious Dr. Matthew Wilson. Under his direction he read the classics with much assiduity, and became well acquainted with the Latin and Greek languages. The writer of this memoir distinctly remembers also, that in the geographical lessons he continually bore off the palm, and received, beyond all others, repeated proofs of approbation from his preceptor. At the age of eighteen he left Lewes Academy, and entered on the study of physic and surgery, under Dr. Sykes, an eminent physician and surgeon of Dover, in the county of Kent. With him he diligently prosecuted his studies for four years, after which he attended the usual courses of medical lectures of the University of Pennsylvania, and then returned to Dover to commence the exercise of his profession.

He did not, however, continue long in the practice. He found the field already engrossed by a number of able and experienced gentlemen of the faculty, among whom was the late lamented Dr. Miller of New-York. Discouraged by the scanty emolument that is commonly the lot of the young physician, and impatient of an inactive life, he determined to abandon the profession for the present, and seek some more productive occupation. This resolution was a matter of much regret among the elder physicians. They entertained a high opinion of his medical acquirements, and considered him as promising to become a distinguished and skilful member of their body. Governor Clayton (who was himself an eminent physician) seeing that he was fixed in his determination, conferred on him the clerkship of the supreme court of the state of Delaware, for the county of Kent.

In this office he continued for some time, but the sedentary nature of its duties was un congenial with his health and habits; he longed to mingle in more active scenes, and possessed that ardent spirit of enterprise that can never rest contented with the tranquil ease of common life. With a certain bravery of resolution, therefore, or rather a noble unconcern, he turned his back upon the comforts and emoluments of office; and resolved upon a measure, as indicative of the force of his character, as it was decisive of his future fortunes. This was to enter as a midshipman into the service of his country, in the year 1799, when menaced with a war with France.

He was at this time almost twenty-nine years of age, highly respected for the solidity of his understanding, and his varied acquirements; it may be readily imagined, therefore, how greatly his friends were dissatisfied at seeing him in a manner taking a retrograde step in life, entering upon that tedious probation which the naval service peculiarly requires, and accepting a grade which is generally allotted to boys and striplings. It was in vain, however, to remonstrate against a resolution, which, once formed, never vibrated. Jones had determined on embracing the profession; he had weighed all the peculiar inconveniences and sacrifices incident to his determination, and had made up his mind to encounter and surmount them all. His friends could only console themselves with the reflection, if courage, activity and hardihood could ensure naval success, Jones was peculiarly fitted for the life he had adopted; and it is probable they felt some degree of admiration for that decision of character, which, in the pursuit of what he conceived a laudable object, could enable him to make such large sacrifices of personal pride and convenience.

The first cruises which he made in his new capacity were under the father of our infant navy, the late Commodore Barry, from whom he derived great instruction in the theory and practice of his profession, and experienced the utmost kindness and civility. He was a midshipman on board the frigate United States, when she bore to France. Chief Justice Ellsworth and General Davis, as envoys

extraordinary to the French Republic. He was next on board of the *Osage*, as midshipman, and during the whole intervening period between his appointment and the war with Tripoli, he was sedulously employed in obtaining that nautical skill for which he is at present celebrated.

On the breaking out of the war with Tripoli, he was stationed on board of the frigate *Philadelphia*, under the command of the gallant Bainbridge. The *Gaillard* which befel that ship and her crew before Tripoli, forms a solemn page in our naval history; atoned for, however, by the brilliant achievements to which it gave rise. Twenty months of severe captivity among a barbarous people, and in a noxious climate; neither broke the spirit, nor impaired the constitution of our hero.—Blest by nature with vigorous health and an invincible resolution, when relieved from bondage by the bravery of his countrymen, he returned home full of life and ardour. He was soon after promoted to a lieutenant.—This grade he had merited before his confinement in Tripoli, but older warrant officers had stood in the way of his preferment.

He was now for some time employed on the Orleans station, where he conducted himself with his usual judgment and propriety, and was a favorite in the polite circles of the Orleans and Mississippi Territories. He was shortly after appointed to the command of the brig *Argus*, stationed for the protection of our commerce on the southern maritime frontier. In this situation he acted with vigilance and fidelity, and though there were at one time insidious suggestions to the contrary, it has appeared that he conformed to his instructions, promoted the public interest, and gave entire satisfaction to the government.

In 1811, Captain Jones was transferred by the secretary of the navy to the command of the sloop of war *Wasp*, mounting eighteen twenty-four pound carronades, and was despatched, in the spring of 1812, with communications from our government to its functionaries at the courts of St. Cloud and St. James. Before he returned from this voyage, war had been declared by the United States against Great Britain. Captain Jones refitted his ship with all possible despatch, and repaired to sea on a cruise, in which he met with no other luck than the capture of an inconsiderable prize. He again put to sea on the 13th of October last, and on the 18th of the month, after a long and heavy gale, he fell in with a number of strongly armed merchantmen under the convoy of his Britannic Majesty's sloop of war the *Frolic*, Captain Whynates.

As this engagement has been one of the most decidedly honorable to the American flag, from the superior force of the enemy; and as the British writers, in endeavouring to account for our successes, and to undervalue our victories, have studiously passed this battle over in silence, and seemed anxious to blot it into oblivion, we shall take this occasion to republish a full and particular account of it, which has already appeared in the *Pitt Folio*, and which we have reason to believe is scrupulously correct.

There was a heavy swell in the sea, and the weather was boisterous. The topgallant yards of the *Wasp* were taken down, her topsails were close reefed, and she was prepared for action. About 11 o'clock the *Frolic* showed Spanish colors, and the *Wasp*, immediately, displayed the American ensign and pendant. At thirty two minutes past 11, the *Wasp* came down to windward on her larboard side, within about sixty yards, and hailed. The enemy had hoisted the Spanish colors, hoisted the British ensign, and opened a fire of cannon and musketry. This the *Wasp* instantly returned; and coming nearer to the enemy, the action became close, and without intermission. In four or five minutes the main-topmast of the *Wasp* was shot away, and, falling down with the main-top-sail yard across the larboard fore and fore-top-sail braces, rendered her head yards unmanageable during the rest of the action. In two or three minutes more her gall and main-top-gallant sail were shot away. Still she continued a close and constant fire. The sea was so rough that the muzzles of the *Wasp's* guns were frequently in the water. The Americans, therefore, fired as the ship's sides were going down, so that their shot went either on the enemy's deck or below it, while the English fired as the vessel rose, and thus her balls chiefly touched the rigging or were blown away. The *Wasp* now shot ahead of the *Frolic*, raked her, and then resumed her position on her larboard bow. Her fire was now obviously attended with such success, and that of the *Frolic* so slackened, that Captain Jones did not wish to board her, lest the roughness of the sea might endanger both vessels; but in the course of a few minutes more every brace of the *Wasp* was shot away, and her rigging so much torn to pieces, that he was afraid that his masts, being unsupported, would go by the board, and the *Frolic* be able to escape. He thought, therefore, the best chance of securing her was to board and decide the contest at once. With this view he wore his ship, and running down upon the enemy, the vessels struck each other, the *Wasp's* side rubbing along the *Frolic's* bow so that her jib-boom came in between the main and main rigging of the *Wasp*, directly over the heads of Captain Jones and the first lieutenant, Mr. Biddle, who were at that moment standing together near the capstan. The *Frolic* lay so fair for raking, that they decided

not to board until they had given a close broadside. Whilst they were loading for this, so near were the two vessels, that the farmers of the *Wasp* were pushed against the *Frolic's* sides, and two of her guns went thro' the bow ports of the *Frolic*, and swept the whole length of her deck. At this moment, Jack Lang, a seaman of the *Wasp*, a gallant fellow who had been once impressed by a British man of war, jumped on a gun with his cutlass, and was springing on board the *Frolic*: Captain Jones wishing to fire again before boarding, called him down, but his impetuosity could not be restrained, and he was already on the bow-sprit of the *Frolic*; when, seeing the ardor and enthusiasm of the *Wasp's* crew, Lieutenant Biddle mounted on the hammock cloth to board. 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