



AND

North-Carolina State Gazette.

Ours are the plans of fair-weather peace,
Unwar'd by party rage, to live like brothers.

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Commodore Preble's letter concluded from our last.

16th. No news of the frigates, and but short allowance of water in the squadron. I sent the *Enterprise* to Malta, with orders to the agent there to hire transports and send off immediately a supply of fresh water, provision and other stores, which have become necessary, as some of the squadron have now been five months in sight of this dismal coast, without once visiting a friendly port: those vessels as well as the gun-boats receive their supply of water and provision from the *Constitution*.

18th As the season is fast approaching when we may expect bad weather and no news of the frigates, I have determined to make an attack as soon as the wind proves favourable. At 8 P. M. I sent Capts. Decatur and Chauncey in two small boats to reconnoitre the harbour, and obtain the disposition of the enemy's flotilla at night; they returned at midnight and reported that they were anchored in a line abreast, from the mole to the Bashaw's castle, with their heads to the eastward, for the defence of the inner harbour. At day light the wind shifted suddenly from N. E. to N. N. W. and brought a heavy sea on shore, which obliged us, for greater safety, to weigh and stand to sea.

20th. We have gained an offing of 9 or ten leagues, still blowing hard. We met with the *Ketch Intrepid* from Syracuse, with a cargo of fresh water, stock and vegetables for the squadron.

22d. Fell in with a ship from Malta, with water and live stock for the squadron. These cargoes arrived very opportunely, as we have been for some time on short allowance of water. The wind having moderated, we stood in, and anchored with the squadron 6 miles N. E. by N. from Tripoli; all the boats were engaged in discharging the transports. The *Enterprise* arrived from Malta, but brought no intelligence of the long expected frigates.

24th With a light breeze from the N. E. we stood in with the squadron prepared for action, intending to attack the town and shipping in the night. At 8 in the evening anchored about two and an half miles from the batteries. A midnight fell calm. I sent the bomb vessels under protection of the gun-boats, to bombard the town, the boats of the squadron were employed in towing them in. At 2 A. M. the bombardment commenced, and continued until day light, but with what effect it is uncertain.

At six all the boats joined us, and were taken in tow by the squadron, which was under weigh, and standing off. At 7 anchored 4 miles north of the town. The weather for several days proved unfavorable for approaching the shore.

28th. We were favored with a pleasant breeze from the eastward. At 3 P. M. we weighed, and stood in for Tripoli. At 5 anchored the *Constitution* in two miles N. by E. from fort English, and 2 and an half from the Bashaw's castle; the light vessels ordered to keep under weigh. We were employed until 8 P. M. in making arrangements for attacking the town; a number of the officers, and many of the seamen of the *Constitution* being attached to the bomb gun, and ship's boats; Capt. Chauncey and several of his officers, and 70 of the seamen and marines volunteered their services on board the *Constitution*. All the boats in the squadron were officered and manned and attached to the several gun-boats, the two bomb vessels could not be brought into action, as one was leaky and the mortar bed of the other had given way. The *John Adams*, *Scourge*, transports and bombs, were anchored seven miles to the northward of the town. Lieut. commandant Dent, of the *Scourge*, came on board the *Constitution*, and took charge on the gun-deck; Lieut. Izard of the *Scourge* also joined me. Lieut. Gordon commands gun-boat No. 2 and Lieut. Laurence of the *Enterprise*, No. 3—these are the only changes. At half past 1 A. M. the gun-boats in two divisions, led by Capt. Decatur and Somers were ordered to advance, and take their

stations close to the rocks, at the entrance of the harbor, within grape shot distance of the Bashaw's castle. The *Siren*, *Argus*, *Vixen*, *Nautilus*, *Enterprise*, and boats of the squadron accompanied them. At 3 A. M. the boats anchored with springs on within pistol shot of the rocks, and commenced a brisk firing on the shipping, town, batteries and Bashaw's castle, which was warmly returned, but not as well directed; the ship's boats remained with the gun-boats to assist in boarding the enemy's flotilla, if it should venture out, while the brig and schooners kept under weigh ready for the same service, or for annoying the enemy as occasion might present. At day light, presuming that the gun-boats had nearly expended their ammunition, we weighed with the *Constitution* and stood in for the harbor. Fort English, the Bashaw's castle, crown and mole batteries kept up a heavy fire on us as we advanced. At half past five, I made the signal for the gun-boats to retire from action, and for the brig and schooners to take them in tow. We were then within two cables length of the rocks, and commenced a heavy fire of grape and round on 13 of the enemy's gun-boats and galleys, which were in pretty close action with our boats. We sunk one of the enemy's boats, at the same time two more disabled, ran ashore to avoid sinking—the remainder immediately retreated. We continued running in, until we were within musket shot of the crown and mole batteries, when we brought to, and fired upwards of 300 round shot, besides grape and canister, into the town, Bashaw's castle and batteries. We silenced the castle and 2 of the batteries for some time. At a quarter past 6, the gun-boats being all out of shot and in tow, I hauled off, after having been 3-4 of an hour in close action. The gun-boats fired upwards of 400 round shot, besides grape and canister, with good effect. A large Tunisian galliot was sunk in the mole. A Spanish ship, which had entered with an ambassador from the Grand Signior, received considerable damage. The Tripoline galleys and gun-boats lost many men and were much damaged.

The Bashaw's castle and town have suffered very much, as have their crown and mole batteries. Captains Decatur and Somers conducted their divisions of gun-boats with their usual firmness and address, and were well supported by the officers and men attached to them. The brig and schooners were also well conducted during the action, and fired a number of shot at the enemy; but their guns are too light to do much execution. They suffered considerably in their sails and rigging. The officers and crew of the *Constitution* behaved well. I cannot, in justice to Capt. Chauncey, omit noticing the very able assistance I received from him on the quarter deck of the *Constitution*, during the whole of the action. The damage which we have received is principally above the hull; three lower shrouds, two spring stays, two topmast back stays, trusses, chains & lifts of the main yard, shot away.

Our sails had several cannot shot through them, and were beside considerably cut by grape—much of our running rigging cut to pieces, one of our anchor stocks and our larboard cable shot away, and a number of grape shot were sticking in different parts of the hull; but not a man hurt! A boat belonging to the *John Adams*, with a master's mate (Mr. Creighton) and eight men, were sunk by a double headed shot from the batteries, while in tow of the *Nautilus*, which killed three men and badly wounded one, who, with Mr. Creighton and the other four, were picked up by one of our boats. The only damage our gun-boats suffered, was in their rigging and sails, which were considerably cut with the enemy's round and grape shot. At 11 A. M. we anchored with the squadron 5 miles N. E. by N. from Tripoli, and repaired the damage received in the action.

29th and 30th, preparing the bomb vessels for service, supplying the gun-boats with ammunition, &c. 31st, a vessel arrived from Malta with provisions and stores, brought no news of Commodore Barron or the frigates. We discharged this vessel's cargo, and ordered her to return.

Sep. 2, the bomb vessels having been repaired and ready for service, Lieut. Dent and Robinson resumed the command of them. Lieut. Morris of the *Argus* took command of No. 3, and Lieut. Trippe having nearly recovered from his wounds, resumed the command of No. 6, which he so gallantly conducted the 3d ult. Capt. Chauncey, with several young gentlemen, and 60 men from the *John Adams*, volunteered on board the *Constitution*. At 4 P. M. made the signal to weigh, kept under sail all night—At 11 P. M. a general signal to prepare for battle: A Spanish polacre in ballast came out of Tripoli with an ambassador of the Grand Signior on board, who had been sent from Constantinople to Tripoli to confirm the Bashaw in his title. This ceremony takes place in all the Barbary regencies every 5 years. The captain of this vessel informed us, that our shot and shells had made great havoc and destruction in the city, and among the shipping, and that a vast number of people have been killed; also informs us that three of the boats which were sunk by our shot in the actions of the 3d and 28th ult. had been got up, repaired and fitted for service.

3d, at 2 P. M. Tripoli bore S S W 1-2 miles distant, wind E by E. At half past 2, the signals were made for the gun-boats to cast off, advance and attack the enemy's galleys and gun-boats, which were all under weigh in the eastern part of the harbor, whither they had for some time been working up against the wind. This was certainly a judicious movement of theirs, as it precluded the possibility of our boats going down to attack the town, without leaving the enemy's flotilla in their rear, and directly to windward. I accordingly ordered the bomb vessels to run down within proper distance of the town, and bombard it, while our gun-boats were to engage the enemy's galleys and boats to windward. At half past 3, P. M. our bombs having gained the station to which they were directed, anchored and commenced throwing shells into the city. At the same time our gun-boats opened a brisk fire on the galleys and within point blank shot, which was warmly returned by them and fort English, and by a new battery a little to the westward; but as soon as our boats arrived within good musket shot of their galleys and boats, they gave way and retreated to the shore within the rocks, and under cover of musketry from fort English. They were followed by our boats and by the *Siren*, *Argus*, *Vixen*, *Nautilus* and *Enterprise*, as far as the reefs would permit them to go with prudence. The action was then divided. One division of our boats with the brig and schooners attacked fort English, whilst the other was engaged with the enemy's galleys and boats. The Bashaw's castle, the Mole, Crown, and several other batteries, kept up a constant fire on our bomb vessels which were well conducted, and threw shells briskly into the town; but from their situation, they were very much exposed, and in great danger of being sunk. I accordingly ran within them with the *Constitution*, to draw off the enemy's attention, and amuse them whilst the bombardment was kept up. We brought to within reach of grape, & fired 11 broadsides in the Bashaw's castle, town and batteries, in a situation where more than 70 guns could bear upon us. One of their batteries was silenced. The town, castle and other batteries considerably damaged—By this time it was half past four o'clock. The wind was increasing, and inclined rapidly to the northward. I made the signal for the boats to retire from action, and for the brig & schooners to take them in tow, and soon after hauled off with the *Constitution* to repair damages. Our main topmast was totally disabled by a shell from the batteries, which cut away the leach rope and several cloths of the sail. Another shell went through the fore topsail and one through the jib. All our sails considerably cut, two topmast backstays shot away, mainsheet, foretacks, lifts, braces, bowlines, and the running rigging, generally very much cut, but no shot in our hull, excepting a few grape. Our gun-boats were an hour and fifteen minutes in action. They disabled several of the enemy's galleys & boats

and considerably damaged fort English. Most of our boats received damage in their rigging and sails. The bomb vessel No. 1, commanded by Lieut. Robinson, was disabled, every shroud being shot away, the bed of the mortar rendered useless, and the vessel near sinking. She was however towed off. About 50 shells were thrown into the town, and our boats fired 400 round shot, besides grape & canister. They were led into action by Capt. Decatur and Somers with their usual gallantry. The brig and schooners were handsomely conducted, and fired many shot with effect at fort English, which they were near enough to reach with their carronades. They suffered considerably in their rigging, and the *Argus* received a 32 pound shot in the hull forward, which cut off a bower cable as it entered. We kept under weigh until 11 P. M. when we anchored, Tripoli bearing S S W. 3 leagues. I again with pleasure acknowledge the services of an able and active officer in Capt. Chauncey, serving on the quarter deck of the *Constitution*. At sunrise, I made the signal for the squadron to prepare for action. The carpenters were sent on board the bombs to repair damages, and our boats employed in supplying the bombs and gun-boats with ammunition, and to replace the expenditures.

Desirous of annoying the enemy, by all the means in my power, I directed to be put into execution a long contemplated plan of sending a fire ship, or infernal, into the harbor of Tripoli, in the night, for the purpose of endeavoring to destroy the enemy's shipping, and shatter the Bashaw's castle and town. Capt. Somers, of the *Nautilus*, having volunteered his services, had, for several days before this period, been directing the preparation of the *Ketch Intrepid*, assisted by Lieuts. Wadsworth and Israel. About 100 barrels of powder and 150 fixed shells, were apparently judiciously disposed of on board her. The fuzes leading to the magazine, where all the powder was deposited, were calculated to burn a quarter of an hour.

September 4th. The *Intrepid* being prepared for the intended service Capt. Somers and Lieut. Wadsworth made choice of two of the fastest rowing boats in the squadron for bringing them out. After reaching their destination and firing the combustible materials, which were to communicate with the fuzes, Capt. Somers' boat was manned with 4 seamen from the *Nautilus*, and Lieut. Wadsworth's, with 6 from the *Constitution*. Lieut. Israel accompanied them. At 8 in the evening, the *Intrepid* was under sail, and standing from the port, with a leading breeze from the eastward. The *Argus*, *Vixen* and *Nautilus* convoyed her as far as the rock. On entering the harbor, several shot was fired at her from the batteries. In a few minutes after, when she had apparently nearly gained the intended place of destination, she suddenly exploded, without their having previously fired a round filled with splinters and other combustibles, which were intended to create a blaze, in order to deter the enemy from boarding, whilst the fire was communicating to the fuzes, which led to the magazine. The effect of the explosion awed their batteries into profound silence, with astonishment. Not a gun was afterwards fired for the night. The shrieks of the inhabitants informed us that the town was thrown into the greatest terror and consternation by the explosion of the magazine, and the bursting and falling of shells in all directions. The whole squadron waited with the utmost anxiety to learn the fate of the adventurers, from a signal previously agreed on in case of success, but waited in vain: no signs of their safety were to be observed. The *Argus*, *Vixen*, and *Nautilus* hovered round the entrance of the port until sunrise, when they had a full view of the whole harbor. Not a vestige of the *Ketch* or boats were to be seen. One of the enemy's largest gun-boats was missing, and three others were seen very much shattered and damaged, which the enemy were hauling on shore. From these circumstances I am led to believe, that these boats were detached from the enemy's flotilla to intercept

the *Ketch*, and without suspecting her to be a fire-ship, the missing boat had suddenly boarded her, when the gallant Somers and heroes of his party, observing the other three boats surrounding them, and no prospect of escape, determined at once to prefer death and the destruction of the enemy to captivity and torturing slavery, put a match to the train leading directly to the magazine which at once blew the whole into the air, and terminated their existence. My conjectures respecting this affair are founded on a resolution which Capt. Somers, Lieuts. Wadsworth and Israel had formed, neither to be taken by the enemy, nor suffer him to get possession of the powder on board the *Intrepid*. They expected to enter the harbor without discovery, but had declared if they should be disappointed, and the enemy should board them, before they reached the place of destination, in such force as to leave them no hopes of a safe retreat, that they would put a match to the magazine and blow themselves and their enemies up together; determined as there was no exchange of prisoners, that their country should never pay ransom for them, nor the enemy receive a supply of powder through their means. The disappearance of one of the enemies boats, and the shattered condition of the three others confirm me in my opinion, that they were an advanced guard, detached from the main body of the flotilla on discovering the approach of the *Intrepid*, and that they attempted to board her before she had reached her point of destination, otherwise the whole of their shipping would have suffered, and perhaps would have been totally destroyed. That she was blown up before she gained her station is certain, by which the service has lost three very gallant officers. Capt. Somers, and Lieuts. Wadsworth and Israel, were officers of conspicuous bravery, talents and merit—they had uniformly distinguished themselves in the several actions—were beloved, and lamented by the whole squadron.

September the 5th. We were employed in supplying the gun-boats with ammunition, &c. and repairing the bomb vessels for another attack, but the wind shifting to the N. N. E. a heavy swell setting on shore, and other indications of bad weather, determined me to take the guns, mortars, shot and shells out of the boats into the *Constitution* and *John Adams*, which was accordingly done. The weather continuing to wear a threatening aspect until the 7th, and our ammunition being reduced to a quantity not more than sufficient for three vessels to keep up the blockade: no intelligence of the expected reinforcements; and the season so far advanced as to render it imprudent to hazard the gun-boats any longer on the station; I gave orders for the *John Adams*, *Siren*, *Nautilus*, *Enterprise* and *Scourge* to take the bombs and gun-boats in tow, and proceed to Syracuse with them, the *Argus* and *Vixen* to remain with the *Constitution* to keep up the blockade.

September the 10th. The United States ship *President*, Commodore Barron, and *Constellation*, Capt. Campbell, have, in sight and soon joined company, when the command of the squadron was surrendered to Commodore Barron with the usual ceremony. I continued in company with the squadron until the 12th, when three strange ships came in sight standing direct for Tripoli. Chase was given and two of them boarded and taken possession of by the *Constitution*, the *President* in company, about four leagues from Tripoli, but not more than 5 miles from the land; while the *Constellation* and *Argus* were in chase of the third. The two boarded by the *Constitution* were loaded with about sixteen thousand bushels of wheat. Tripoli is in a state of starvation, and there can be no doubt but those cargoes were meant as a supply and relief to our enemies.

Considering the season too far advanced and weather too uncertain to hazard any further operations against Tripoli at present, Commodore Barron determined that the prizes should be sent to Malta, under convoy of the *Constitution*, it being necessary,