

Santa Fe (sahn´tah fay´), they proved that it was all a mistake, and, being set free, returned home.

Pike, Lewis, and Clark spoke so warmly of the fine hunting grounds they had seen that John Jacob As´tor, a fur trader in New York, decided to found a trading post on the Pacific. He therefore sent out a party, which crossed the continent and built a fort called As-to´ri-a, at the mouth of the Columbia River. The adventures of this party were described by Washington Irving, an American author. He gives a charming account of the long journey across the plains, of the buffalo hunting, and of many encounters with the Indians, besides telling us about the life at Astoria, the first American settlement on the Pacific coast.



XI. OUR WAR AGAINST AFRICAN PIRATES.

THE purchase of Louisiana, and the explorations of Pike, Lewis, and Clark, were not the only important and interesting events during Jefferson's two terms as President of the United States. He also had to make war against the pirates living on the northern coast of Africa who belonged to the Bar´ba-ry States, or Algiers, Tu´nis, Trip´o-li, and Mo-roc´co.

For many years these pirates had attacked any vessel they met in the Mediterranean. Generally it was only to demand a certain sum of money, but if the captain either could not or would not pay it, they often sank the vessel after robbing it, or towed it into one of their harbors, where they sold the crew into captivity.

The people of northern Africa were Mohammedans, and for that reason hated all Christians. Captive sailors were therefore often treated with the greatest cruelty. European countries, wishing to trade in the Mediterranean, had learned to fear these pirates so greatly that they actually paid the Barbary rulers large sums for leaving their ships alone. As we have seen, our government followed their example in the treaty made with Algiers in 1795.

In 1800, one of our brave naval officers, William Bain´bridge, was sent to carry the agreed tribute to the *dey* (day), or ruler, of Algiers. While Bainbridge was in the harbor, directly under the guns of the fortress, the dey suddenly ordered him to transport his

ambassador to Con-stan-ti-no´ple, while flying the Al-ge-rine´ flag at the American ship’s masthead. Bainbridge refused, saying that the Americans were not the dey’s slaves. But the pirate haughtily answered: “You pay me tribute, by which you become my slaves, and therefore I have a right to order you as I think proper.”

As the guns of the fort were pointed straight at him, and resistance would bring about the destruction of his ship and slavery for his crew, Bainbridge had no choice but to obey. But as soon as he was out of gunshot, and long before he had lost sight of Algiers, he ordered the dey’s flag hauled down and again hoisted our stars and stripes.

Of course, Bainbridge was very indignant at the way his country had been treated, and complained to the sultan at Constantinople. The sultan did not approve of what the dey had done, and gave Bainbridge full power to force the dey to give up all his American prisoners without asking any ransom in exchange. While still in Constantinople, Bainbridge wrote home, saying: “I hope I shall never again be sent to Algiers with tribute unless I am authorized to deliver it from the mouth of our cannon.”

The insulting and treacherous behavior of Algiers and the other Barbary States roused the anger of our countrymen. But Jefferson once remarked that what had happened proved the truth of Franklin’s famous words: “If you make yourself a sheep, the wolves will eat you,” and declared that no more tribute should be paid.

In the meantime, the *bashaw*, or ruler, of Tripoli, hearing that Algiers received tribute from America, wanted some too. So, in 1800, he demanded money, threatening war unless it was paid. The United States, instead of sending it, merely waited until the bashaw declared war, and then sent a squadron to the Mediterranean. On the way thither, it captured a Tri-pol´i-tan pirate ship, and, appearing off Tripoli, began to blockade the port, to the bashaw’s dismay. As our navy was very weak, and the Tripolitan harbor was defended by one hundred and fifteen guns, nineteen gunboats, and about twenty-five thousand soldiers, it could not do more, and the war dragged on some time without any great event.

But in 1803 the *Philadelphia*, under Captain Bainbridge, while pursuing a Tripolitan gunboat, suddenly ran upon a rock not marked upon any chart. The American seamen frantically tried to get her off; then, seeing it was in vain, they made an attempt to scuttle their ship. But, in spite of their efforts, the *Philadelphia* was seized by the enemy, who towed her into the harbor of Tripoli, intending to change her into a pirate ship.

Bainbridge and all his men were made prisoners, and kept in Tripoli, where they were treated very unkindly for many months. But, although a prisoner, Bainbridge managed to send a letter to Preble, another American officer, who was then cruising about the Mediterranean.

In this letter, Bainbridge told the Americans what the pirates were doing to the *Philadelphia*, and suggested that our men should rescue or destroy her rather than see her put to so shameful a use. Preble talked the matter over with his officers, and they decided that it would be impossible to rescue the ship with their small force. Among these officers was Stephen De-ca'tur, who was such a patriot that when asked to give a toast at a public dinner he proudly cried. "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong!"

This young man bravely offered to steal into the harbor and destroy the ship. His offer was discussed, then accepted, and a Tripolitan boat which had recently been captured was chosen for the expedition. It was loaded with gunpowder and all kinds of things which would burn quickly. Then most of the seventy heroes who volunteered to take part in the dangerous work went below, to remain hidden until their help was needed.

Decatur, and the few men needed to sail the ship, dressed like Mediterranean seamen, and in that disguise entered the harbor of Tripoli at nightfall without arousing any suspicions. Little by little, they brought their boat close up to the *Philadelphia*. Pretending they had lost their anchor in a storm, they asked and received permission to moor their boat to the frigate, so as to make it safe for the night.

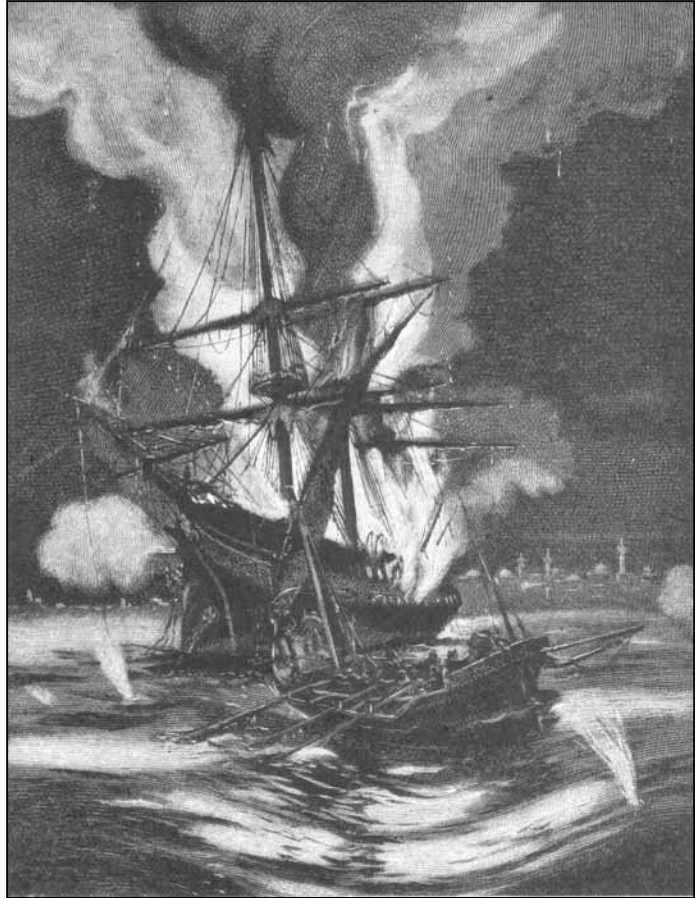
When all this was done, Decatur gave a signal, and the Americans, rushing out of their hiding places, scrambled up over the sides of the *Philadelphia*. There they had a short but fierce fight with the Tripolitans, who, in their terror of these bold Americans, finally jumped overboard and swam ashore.

The powder was now brought from the vessel to the frigate, which was speedily set afire in many places. Then the Americans rushed back to their boat, and, cutting it loose, began to make their way out of the harbor. As they sailed away they beheld the *Philadelphia* wreathed in flames, and heard her heated guns go off one after another with a loud and solemn boom. These sounds were also heard by the Americans in their prison, and you may be sure they were proud of the daring of their friends.

The Tripolitans, in the mean time, were stiff with amazement at seeing the vessel destroyed in their own port, directly under their big guns; and before they thought of avenging themselves it was too late. Owing to their terror, Decatur got safely back to our fleet, where he gladly reported the complete success of his undertaking, which had not cost the life of a single man.

This deed, which the great English admiral, Nelson, called “the most bold and daring act of the age,” was soon followed by an attempt to bombard the city. Then there were five naval battles,

in one of which Decatur narrowly escaped death at the hands of a Tripolitan pirate. But, although our vessels managed to do considerable harm to the enemy’s navy, the war threatened to run on.



The Burning of the *Philadelphia*.



XII. DEATH OF SOMERS.

KNOWING that the Tripolitans were short of powder, Richard Somers, an intimate friend of Decatur’s, next suggested a plan to destroy the Tripolitan shipping by means of a floating mine. This idea was warmly welcomed, and great stores of powder, shot, and iron were placed on board Decatur’s boat, the *Intrepid*. Then Somers solemnly warned the few men who were to go with him that he would blow up the boat, and all on board, rather than let the powder fall into the enemy’s hands.