

**CHAMBERS'S SUPPLEMENTARY READER.
NO. 1. LORD DUNDONALD. ANECDOTES OF
DOGS. THE GOLDMAKERS'
VILLAGE. SELECT POEMS FROM COWPER.
(SELECTED FROM MISCELLANY OF
INSTRUCTIVE AND ENTERTAINING TRACTS)**

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Chambers's Supplementary Reader. No. 1. Lord Dundonald. Anecdotes of Dogs. The Goldmakers' Village. Select Poems from Cowper. (Selected from Miscellany of Instructive and Entertaining Tracts) by Anonymous

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HE career of an heroic seaman always possesses an interest to an insular nation like the English. Still more is this the case when the seaman, as a naval commander, achieves brilliant exploits against enemies superior in force to himself. And still more, again, is the interest excited, when such a man sees his fair fame clouded by undeserved accusations, and fails to obtain justice until gray hairs mark the declining years of life. Such a man was the lately deceased Thomas Cochrane, Earl of Dundonald, Admiral of the Red, and Rear-admiral of the Fleet.

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BIRTH, HOME, AND BOYHOOD.

Thomas Cochrane, born at Annsfield, in Lanarkshire, on the 14th December 1775, was descended from a very old Scottish family. He himself believed that the first Cochrane was a Scandinavian searover, who, in a remote age, settled on the shores of Renfrew and Ayr; and such a rover would certainly not have been an inapt ancestor for him. But be this as it may, there are records of the family so far back as the year 1262, as chieftains of the barony of Coveran, Cochran, or Cochrane. Robert Cochran, about four centuries ago, was a great favourite with James III. of Scotland, and by this favouritism won for himself the enmity of many Scottish nobles. A later representative of the family, William Cochrane, as a reward for mediating between Charles I. and his angry subjects in the north, was raised to the peerage in 1641, under the title of Lord Cochrane of Dundonald; and in 1669 the title was elevated to the higher one of Earl of Dundonald. The Dundonalds were powerful in Scotland during the remainder of that century, but in the following century they merely took rank among the nobility of average influence.

The subject of this sketch was the eldest son of the ninth earl; his mother was a daughter of Captain Gilchrist of the royal navy. As the patriarchal estates had nearly all left the family, owing to rebellions, forfeitures, mortgages, and other causes, Thomas inherited little beyond the chance of an earldom. His father made many attempts to resuscitate the family fortunes, by entering into commercial and manufacturing enterprises. Among these were schemes for preparing soda from common salt; for the employment of alumina as a mordant for dyers and calico-printers; for preparing British gum as a substitute for gum-Senegal in calico-printing; for the manufacture of sal-ammoniac; for producing white-lead by a new process; and for extracting tar from pit-coal. All these schemes—as well as numerous experiments on the gas produced from coal, and on the application of chemistry to agriculture—evinced considerable chemical knowledge and general intelligence; but they proved disastrous to the family in a pecuniary sense.

When it became necessary to adopt some definite mode of life, young Cochrane, through the aid of his uncle Alexander, a captain in the navy, entered into the naval service. Before this, however, an attempt was made to obtain for him a position in the army; but his dislike of the stiff martinet rules of military drill proved too strong to be surmounted. In his *Autobiography*, he gives an amusing account of his first and only experience as a military officer: "By way of initiation into the mysteries of the military profession, I was placed under the tuition of an old sergeant, whose first lessons well accorded with his instructions, "not to pay attention to my

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foibles." My hair, cherished with boyish pride, was formally cut, and plastered back with a vile composition of candle-grease and flour; to which was added the torture incident to the cultivation of an incipient *quena*. My neck, from childhood open to the Lowland breeze, was encased in an inflexible leathern collar or stock, selected according to my preceptor's notions of military propriety; these almost verging on strangulation. A blue semi-military tunic, with red collar and cuffs, in imitation of the Windsor uniform, was provided; and to complete the *sout ensemble*, my father, who was a determined Whig partisan, insisted on my wearing yellow waistcoat and breeches—yellow being the Whig colour, of which I was admonished never to be ashamed. A more certain mode of calling into action the dormant obstinacy of a sensitive high-spirited lad could not have been devised, than that of converting him into a caricature, hateful to himself and ridiculous to others. As may be imagined, my costume was calculated to attract attention, the more so from being accompanied by a stature beyond my years. Passing one day near the Duke of Northumberland's palace at Charing Cross, I was beset by a troop of ragged boys, evidently bent on amusing themselves at the expense of my personal appearance, and in their peculiar slang indulging in comments thereon far more critical than complimentary. Stung to the quick, I made my escape from them; then rushing home, begged my father to let me go to sea with my uncle, in order to save me from the degradation of floured head, pigtail, and yellow breeches.'

ENTERS THE NAVY.

At length this poor son of a poor earl, on the 27th June 1793, entered on board H.M.S. *Hind* at Sheerness, as midshipman, he being then in his eighteenth year. He was a stripling over six feet in height, was older than middies usually are on entering the service, was nephew to the captain of the ship, and was a lord (Lord Cochrane) to boot. These characteristics might possibly have interfered with a due obedience to discipline, were it not that he had a real love for sea-life, which rendered him willing to bend to the necessary conditions of the service. Fortunately, he was placed under a skilful though rough lieutenant, who speedily trained him to good seamanship. The *Hind* started on a cruise to the coast of Norway, to look out for French privateers or convoys. Once, while on this duty, in return for hospitalities received on shore, many Norwegians were invited to visit the ship; the ladies were 'whipped' or hoisted up by means of ropes and a sort of chair with ease and comfort. Unfortunately, however, there was a parrot on board who had learned most of the boatswain's calls. While one lady was being lifted in the chair, the parrot called out: '*Let go!*' The seamen, thinking it was the boatswain's command, *did let go*; and the lady had an unexpected though temporary dip in the sea.

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On returning from Norway, young Cochrane was transferred from the *Hind* to the *Thetis*, a more powerful frigate, which was placed under his uncle's command. The *Thetis* was ordered to join the squadron of Admiral Murray, sent out in 1794 to capture some of the French settlements in North America. When about nineteen years of age, our hero was promoted by Admiral Murray to the rank of junior lieutenant; and soon afterwards he became acting-lieutenant of the *Africa*, under Captain Home. Cochrane, in his *Autobiography*, speaks of the 'dreary five years' that the squadron spent near the North American coast, capturing few prizes, and being engaged in few exciting adventures; cruising among the fogs of Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, instead of joining in the brilliant achievements that marked the maritime wars of Europe.

CRUISE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN: 1798—1801.

Towards the close of 1798, Cochrane received the appointment of junior lieutenant of the *Barfleur*, the flag-ship of a fleet with which Lord Keith was blockading the Mediterranean ports of Spain. This was a kind of service that at first gave slender hope for activity, seeing that the Spanish fleet shewed little tendency to quit the defensive batteries of Cadiz, and hazard a naval battle. On the 6th of May 1799, however, there was a formidable assemblage of hostile ships. A French fleet, which came quietly round to Cadiz, consisted of thirty-three sail of the line; and a Spanish fleet of twenty-two sail, in the harbour, swelled the number to fifty-five sail of the line, besides several frigates belonging to the enemy. Lord Keith had under him at the time fifteen sail of the line and one frigate. The Spaniards, however, did not come out of the harbour, and the French did not want to fight; for their purpose was to liberate the Spanish fleet from Cadiz, and accompany it to Toulon. Young Cochrane and other officers of the *Barfleur* burned with impatience to be 'up and doing,' to connect their names with some achievement that would bring them honour or prize-money, or both. On one occasion, when Lord Keith knew, but Earl St Vincent (his superior in the Mediterranean command) did not know, the 'whereabouts' of the French, St Vincent sent peremptory orders which Keith felt compelled to obey, although they carried him away from the very direction in which he knew the French were sailing. In June, Keith succeeded St Vincent as commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean; and Cochrane shifted with him from the *Barfleur* to the *Queen Charlotte*, a larger and finer ship. Again and again was the search for the two hostile fleets renewed: a weaker force running up and down the Mediterranean to intercept, fight, and capture two fleets of much greater strength. Now at Toulon, now at Minorca, now at Gibraltar; then at Cadiz, at Tetuan, at Carthage—'the big ones' were always running away from the 'little ones.' At last

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it became certain that they had emerged from the Mediterranean altogether, and were proceeding northward along the Portuguese coast to the Bay of Biscay. Lord Keith pursued, but had the mortification of seeing them enter safely at Brest, where he could not get at them. The whole affair was most distasteful to young officers like Cochrane, affording not the smallest opening for a brush with the enemy. Keith, foiled in his chase, went to Torbay; and while he was there, the French and Spanish fleets, stealing quietly out of Brest, sailed down again towards the Mediterranean!

Cochrane's first experience in the Mediterranean was thus anything but gratifying to him. While Keith was at Torbay, Nelson was achieving brilliant things off the Sicilian coast, and was making himself the idol of the navy. Cochrane never served under Nelson, but they conversed once at Palermo; and the former treasured up a maxim which Nelson impressed upon him in regard to naval warfare: 'Never mind manœuvres; always go at them!' This was just after Cochrane's own heart; he did 'go at them' all his life, whenever he had an opportunity.

A more busy scene was now in store for the energetic young Scotchman. Early in 1800, Cochrane was placed in command of the *Speedy* sloop. If ever a man owed success to himself and his crew, and not to his vessel, such was now the case. The *Speedy* was a sloop of 158 tons, armed with fourteen 4-pounders, and manned, 'or rather crowded,' as he expressed it, with fifty-four officers and men. He asked for and obtained two 12-pounders, but found that his little craft was too weak to carry them. When, in his old age, the Earl of Dundonald wrote his *Autobiography*, he dwelt with a sort of comic affection on the little vessel which, as the young Lord Cochrane, had formed his first command nearly sixty years before. 'Despite her unformidable character,' he says, 'and the personal discomfort to which all on board were subjected, I was very proud of my little vessel, caring nothing for her want of accommodation, though in this respect her cabin merits passing notice. It had not so much as room for a chair, the floor being entirely occupied by a small table surrounded with lockers, answering the double purpose of store chests and seats. The difficulty was to get seated, the ceiling being only five feet high; so that the object could only be accomplished by rolling on the locker, a movement sometimes attended with unpleasant failure. The most singular discomfort, however, was that my only practicable mode of shaving consisted in removing the skylight, and putting my head through, to make a toilet-table of the quarter-deck.'

Nevertheless, in this little tub of a vessel, Cochrane did that which made the French and Spaniards very uneasy, and proportionably won for him a reputation at home. Besides boarding and searching innumerable neutral vessels, he had much fighting, and some capturing. On the 10th of May he captured the *Intrepide*, a