

**THE AMERICAN TARS IN
TRIPOLITAN SLAVERY. HORRORS
OF SLAVERY; OR THE AMERICAN
TARS IN TRIPOLI. PP 251-526**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649133826

The American tars in Tripolitan slavery. Horrors of Slavery; or the American tars in Tripoli. pp 251-526 by William Ray

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Cover @ 2017

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WILLIAM RAY

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THE
MAGAZINE OF HISTORY

WITH
NOTES AND QUERIES

Extra Number—No. 14

THE AMERICAN TARS IN TRIPOLITAN
SLAVERY

William Ray



WILLIAM ABBATT

141 EAST 25TH STREET

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NEW YORK

1911

THE AMERICAN TARS IN TRIPOLITAN SLAVERY

CONTAINING

AN ACCOUNT OF THE LOSS AND CAPTURE OF THE UNITED STATES FRIGATE *PHILADELPHIA*; TREATMENT AND SUFFERINGS OF THE PRISONERS; DESCRIPTION OF THE PLACE; MANNERS, CUSTOMS, &c, OF THE TRIPOLITANS; PUBLIC TRANSACTIONS OF THE UNITED STATES WITH THAT REGENCY, INCLUDING GEN. EATON'S EXPEDITION, INTERSPERSED WITH INTERESTING REMARKS, ANECDOTES, AND POETRY, ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS

WRITTEN DURING UPWARDS OF NINETEEN MONTHS' IMPRISONMENT AND VASSALAGE AMONG THE TURKS

BY

WILLIAM RAY

TROY:

PRINTED BY OLIVER LYON

FOR THE AUTHOR

1808

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Reprinted

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(Being Extra No. 14 of THE MAGAZINE OF HISTORY WITH NOTES AND QUERIES)

Horrors of Slavery:
OR, THE
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BY WILLIAM RAY.

"NATURE NE'ER MEANT TO FORM A SLAVE;

"HER BIRTH-RIGHT'S LIBERTY."

—SLAVERY! THOU ART A BITTER CUP.

STERNE.*

TROY:
PRINTED BY OLIVER LYON,
FOR THE AUTHOR.

1808.

EDITOR'S PREFACE.

We have great pleasure in offering to our subscribers this, the only edition since the original of 1808, of a very scarce item of Americana, descriptive of a captivity which, though just over a century ago, will read to most of them like a story of the Middle Ages. Yet it is strictly true, and one of its characters (Doctor Cowdery) died as late as 1852.

The author was one of those restless, versatile Americans, who remind us of him who was

Everything by starts and nothing long.

Not gifted with the doggedness necessary to achieve wealth and fame, his very name is unknown to all but the bibliophile; yet he deserved a better fate, as did his more noted contemporary, William Eaton. Both were natives of Connecticut; both had long experience of the Barbary pirates, and both were fated to die in obscurity.

William Ray was born in Salisbury, Conn., December 9, 1771. In 1781 his father removed to New York State, and in 1790 our hero began life as a school-teacher in Dover, Dutchess county. In 1792 he became a country storekeeper, but was ruined by the Embargo.

We are unable to learn anything definite of him for the next ten years, but in 1803 he was offered the editorship of a Philadelphia newspaper; from which circumstance we may reasonably infer that he had considerable talent. On the way to assume the new post he was taken sick, and when, after prolonged delay, he

reached Philadelphia, it was only to find that another had meanwhile been appointed in his stead.

In his disappointment and poverty he enlisted in the Navy as a private of the Marine Corps, and sailed on the frigate *Philadelphia*, commanded by Captain Bainbridge. His educational advantages soon secured him the berth of "ship's writer," where he probably escaped much of the disagreeable duties of an ordinary subordinate.

Among the *Philadelphia's* officers were some destined to renown—Biddle, Porter and Macdonough among them. It is worth noticing that the second, then only a lieutenant, was already noted for his cruel treatment of the sailors, a trait to be referred to years after when a captain, by one of his crew, Samuel Leech, whose *Voice from the Main Deck* forms one of the series of these "EXTRAS."

Ray's story of the long and rigorous imprisonment of the crew at Tripoli is the fullest and most interesting of the few similar narratives extant. His criticisms on the story of Dr. Cowdery, surgeon of the frigate, are extremely caustic; while his observations on subsequent events in Tripoli, leading up to Eaton's famous desert expedition and its frustration by the weakness of Barron and the intrigues of Lear, are equally interesting.

It will be noticed that his long-winded, pedantic phraseology and imagery, which has free rein throughout the earlier chapters, gradually changes until, in the actual narrative of his Tripolitan sufferings, he uses a very different and much simpler style.

The story of David Valenzin (Chapter XV) is one to make Americans blush for the treatment accorded an injured man, who, worn out by official red-tape and delay, and despairing of justice, finally committed suicide.

On the voyage home on the *Essex*, Ray was captain's clerk; and after leaving the navy, he went to Essex County, N. Y., in

1809, and tried storekeeping once more, only to fail again. In 1812 he established and edited the *Reveille*, the first newspaper in the county; but it soon died. There are preserved at Albany many letters from Ray to Governor Tompkins, applying for office; and on August 26, 1812, he secured the appointment of quartermaster of the Third Brigade of State troops, with the rank of Major. He seems to have been stationed at Plattsburg, but there is no mention of his participating in the battle there.

At the close of the war he removed successively to Whitesboro, Herkimer and Skaneateles, where he appears as a druggist. In 1816 he was editor of the *Onondaga Gazette*, at Onondaga Hill. Here he was a "magistrate"—probably justice of the peace (as he had been in Essex county), and a Commissioner of the Courts of Record; but in 1820 he seems to have been politically out of favor, for he lost his Commissionership. Soon afterwards he published at Auburn a volume of poems, some of considerable merit. Misfortune, however, followed him, the *Albany Argus* in noticing the publication, calling him "that favorite of genius and son of misfortune."

He died at Auburn in 1827. A second edition of the poems was published at New York in 1826. I have been unable to trace any of his posterity, other than his daughter Nancy, who died in 18—, at Syracuse.

EDITOR.

THE AMERICAN TARS IN TRIPOLITAN SLAVERY

EXORDIUM

WHAT has been always customary,
Legal becomes, and necessary;
And, 'mongst ten thousand stranger things,
When wonder from a volume rings,

Is that anxiety we show,
The writer of the book to know;
Whether he ignorant or wise is—
A knave, or fool with virtuous vices;
And hence the practice is to shew 'em
In biographic sketch, or proem:
Here follows, then, or Truth's a liar,
Some pat remarks, if you desire,
And leisure have to halt and read 'em,
If not, skip o'er, and never heed 'em.

That he was born, you well may know,
For any fool could tell you so;
Of whom, perhaps, you wish to hear,
The day, the month, the hour, the year:
All these we very well remember;
'Twas on the ninth day of December,
In seventeen hundred seventy-one,
Before the rising of the sun,
And just, if you'll believe the story,
As chaste, and blushing, fair Aurora
Burst the clasped arms of negro Night,
A RAY from darkness peep'd to light.

His father, wise, as most of men,
Found out that five and five made ten;