LIFE

OF

RICHARD SOMERS,

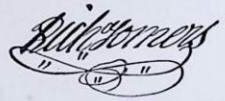
A

MASTER COMMANDANT IN THE U. S. NAVY.

COLLATED BY

J. B. SOMERS, M.D.

PHILADELPHIA:
COLLINS, PRINTER, 705 JAYNE STREET.
1886.



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DEDICATED TO

Mrs. HANNAH SOMERS DAVIS,

NOW IN THE

NINETY-FIRST YEAR OF HER AGE,

WHOSE ABIDING INTEREST IN THE SOMERS'S

HAS STIMULATED THE WRITER TO PERFORM THIS

LABOR OF LOVE AND DUTY

FOR A DISTINGUISHED MEMBER OF THE FAMILY.

PREFATORY.

In 1842, J. Fennimore Cooper published a series of Naval Biographies in 'Graham's Magazine.' Among them was the life of Richard Somers. The facts relative to the family history of Somers were obtained by the author from Mrs. Keen, at a time when dementia had already commenced its ravages. Hence, there is but little that is reliable in relation to his antecedents; concerning his public life the author was more felicitous.

Twenty years later, the editor of the 'South Jersey Republican' requested me to furnish a series of articles for his paper. I published Cooper's Life of Somers with copious notes, but as papers are of an evanescent character I doubt if a complete file of the same remains. I have thought it best, therefore, to re-write the family history and retain so much of Cooper's account as alludes to his public services, and place it in a more enduring form for an interested posterity.

J. B. SOMERS.

LIFE OF RICHARD SOMERS.

THERE are in America two distinct families by the name of Somers. One of English and the other of Germanic origin. The latter are not so numerous as the former, and a tradition exists among them that they too were from English parentage; that the progenitor of their family, sojourning in Germany, married, and hence settled in the Fatherland.

In support of this we find some history dating back to the middle of the sixteenth century, thus making the German Somers's about a century older than the American. Strange to say, religious sentiments were the occasion of each branch separating from the original stock.

During the middle period of the sixteenth century, Transylvania, a country which now constitutes one of the eastern divisions of the Austrian Empire, was an independent principality under the rule of that ardent Protestant, Sigismund. We learn from Robinson, in his 'Ecclesiastical Researches,' that "in 1563, his Highness invited learned foreigners to come into Transylvania, for the purpose of helping forward the Reformation." Among the most eminent of these learned foreigners, according to Mosheim, were Jacob Palœologus, of the Isle of Chio, who was burned at Rome, in 1585, by Pope Gregory XIV.; Christian Franken, who had disputed in person with Socinus; and John Somers, who was Master of the Academy of Clausenberg. Of these devoted reformers, says Lamy, in his 'History of Socinianism,' "John Gerendi was the head of the Sabbatarians, a people who did not keep Sunday but Saturday, and whose disciples took the name of Genoldist." At this day they would be termed Seventh Day Baptist.

In England, the name is an old and honored one, furnishing a chancellor, according to Campbell, "eminent as a lawyer, a statesman, and a man of letters." Of the same family was the famous

admiral, Sir George Somers, the discoverer of the Bermudas or Somers Islands.

In the earlier times it was no uncommon thing for a difference to exist in the orthography of proper names. Of Lord John Somers, says Campbell in the 'Lives of the Lord Chancellors,' "In all the entries respecting Lord Somers in the books of the Middle Temple, till he was called to the bench in 1689, his name is spelt Somer, and then Somers; he himself afterwards sometimes wrote his name Sommers, and generally Somers with a circumflex; but I adhere to that which must now be considered the historical orthography, Somers."

We find the same variation existing both in Germany and America. In the deed of conveyance for the lands at Somers's Point to the immigrant, John Somers, from Thos. Budd, we find the name spelled five times Sômers (with circumflex), three times Sommers, and only twice Somers, and yet the latter method has been unanimously adopted.

John Somers, the immigrant to this country, was born in the city of Worcester, England, about the year 1640. This was the home also of the chancellor, with whom he was contemporary. If the tradition be true that they were of one common stock, and there is much to corroborate it, our minds revert involuntary to the scenes where their boyhood days were spent. The Somers family "had long been owners of a small estate in the parish of Severn Stoke, in the county of Gloucester; they likewise (says Campbell) had another possession, the site of a dissolved nunnery, called White Ladies. This was situated a short distance beyond the walls of the city of Worcester. After the expulsion of the nuns, the dormitory remained entire, and the old hall and refectory had been fitted up into a modern mansion. The property had been granted to the Somers family at the Reformation, and here they received Queen Elizabeth in 1585; the bed in which she slept, and the cup from which she drank, being preserved by them as precious relics, even when they took to the Republican side." Their daily life, as to how they lived in this vast dwelling, is thus described by Cooksey, a kinsman: "The labors of the day over, they repaired for refreshment to one common table in the great hall of the old nunnery, where seldom fewer than twenty or thirty relations and friends of the families assembled daily, and spent their evenings in the utmost cheerfulness and conviviality. The products of the farm, the supplies of fish and game, and viands of every kind, received constantly from their country connections, furnished their table with abundant plenty, and entitled such contributors to a place at it without ceremony or reserve. The annual slaughter of two brawns marked the festivity of Christmas."

We have said religious sentiments developed the two offshoots from English stock. John Somers felt that neither the religion nor birthplace of his fathers must weigh aught against that monitor within that bade him leave all for conscience sake and cast in his fortune with the settlers of the land of Penn; accordingly he, in 1681–2, embarked for America, fully persuaded of the truth of the principles of George Fox. He is said to have been married previously to his departure to a woman of Irish extraction, who on her passage to this country gave birth to her first born, but mother and child died and were buried mid-ocean. Upon his arrival he became a resident of what was then called Upper Dublin, Pennsylvania, now called Somerton. Whilst located there, he married Hannah Hodgkins, who was also a native of the city of Worcester and a member of the Society of Friends. Here their first child was born October 7, 1685, and duly recorded in the books of the meeting. This is a very important item as showing the probable period of the immigrant's arrival, about which nothing definitely is known. We are told by one authority that "in 1681 two ships sailed from London and one from Bristol for the river Delaware, in which were many Friends." The probabilities are that one of these bore the progenitor of the Somers's to our shores.

At what period John Somers located at Somerset Plantation, as Somers's Point was at that time called, is also not definitely known; the earliest record being that "at the first court held at Portsmouth, Cape May County, March 20, 1693, John Somers was appointed supervisor of the roads, and constable for Great Egg Harbor." He remained a member of the Dublin Meeting long after his settlement at Egg Harbor. In the journeyings to and fro the Indian trails and bridle paths were followed from the sea-shore to the Delaware River, the distance being increased by circuitous windings around the heads of rivers and streams. These were not accomplished without considerable danger, as the woods abounded with wolves, panthers, and bears. The times, however, had their compensations, since the deer roamed the forest, wild fowl were abundant, whilst the streams and bays were teeming with fish, oysters, and clams.

November 30, 1695, John Somers purchased of Thos. Budd 3000 acres of land for the sum of £240. He died 1723, and was buried on the plantation.

The eldest son of John Somers was Richard[1], born March 1, 1693, who was the grandfather of Lieutenant Richard.

During the early part of the eighteenth century, the widow of Sir James Letart, a native of Acadia, came to reside in Philadelphia. This lady was the mother of several children, one of whom, a daughter, was adopted by a wealthy gentleman by the name of Peter White, who subsequently moved to Absecon. It was here that Miss Judith Letart White, a very Evangeline for beauty and devotion, won the heart and became the wife of Richard Somers at the early age of fifteen. In addition to her youth and beauty, it is said she brought into the common fund the amount of £1700 sterling.

She was given to hospitality, and exhibited a commendable zeal for the cause of religion. Her home was ever open in which to hold Friends' meetings, whenever ministers of that faith felt burdened to come. Thos. Chalkley, in his journal, dated 2 mo. 1726, says: "From Cape May we travelled along the sea-coast to Egg Harbor; we swam our horses over Egg Harbor River and went over ourselves in canoes, and afterward had a meeting at Richard Somers, which was a large one as could be expected considering the people live at such distance from each other."

The fact of the grandmother of the lamented Somers being a French Canadian is not without interest or significance when it is remembered that Cooper says "that he, like his intimate friend Decatur, had more of the physical appearances of one descended from French stock, than one who was derived from a purely Anglo-Saxon ancestry."

The result of the union of Richard[1] and Judith Letart was nine children, the sixth one being Richard[2] Somers, the father of the subject of this memoir.

Col. Richard Somers was born November 24, 1737. He was for the times considered a man of extraordinary parts. As a surveyor he located a great deal of land in what is now known as Atlantic County.

[He was a colonel in the militia, a judge of the county court, and his name appears among those of the members from his native county in the Provincial Congress for the year 1775; though it would seem that he did not take his seat. Col. Somers was an active Whig in the Revolution, and was much employed, in the field and otherwise, more especially during the first years of the great struggle for national existence. His influence, in the part of New Jersey where he resided, was of sufficient importance to render him particularly obnoxious to the attacks of the Tories, who were in the practice of seizing prominent Whigs, and of carrying them within the British lines; and Great Egg Harbor being much exposed to descents from

the side of the sea, Col. Somers was induced to remove to Philadelphia for protection. As this removal must have take place after the town had been evacuated by Sir Henry Clinton, it could not have taken place earlier than the summer of 1778; and there is good reason for thinking that it occurred two or three seasons later. Here Col. Somers remained for several years, or nearly down to the period of his death], which event occurred October 22, 1794. He married Sophia Stillwell, of Cape May County, December 3, 1761, by whom he had three children, Constant, Sarah, and Richard[3].

Constant Somers married a Miss Sarah Hand, of Cape May County. He was the first collector for the district and port of Great Egg Harbor, a man of sterling integrity and personal worth. He died in 1797, at the age of thirty-seven years, leaving a son and daughter. The former, who bore his father's name, was accidentally killed at Cronstadt, Russia, August 29, 1794, whilst yet a youth of seventeen, by falling into the hold of the ship. The daughter, Sarah S. Somers, married first Wm. Leaming and afterward Nicholas Corson, both of Cape May. The Hon. J. F. Leaming, M.D., of that county, is a son by the first marriage. His mother was the last to bear the name of Somers in that branch of the family, since by her marriage the name became extinct.

Dr. Leaming is in the possession of a very valuable souvenir. There are but three locks of the hair of General Washington now known to exist; one is in Richmond Lodge No. 4, A. F. A. M. Another is owned by the Grand Lodge of Massachusetts, and a third is in a ring that was presented by Washington to Lieut. Richard Somers, and through whom it descended to its present owner.

Sarah, the daughter of Col. Somers, married Capt. Wm. Jones Keen, of Philadelphia, and died in 1850, leaving no issue.

Lieut. Richard Somers, the youngest child of Col. Richard Somers, was born at Somers's Point, September 15, 1778. The house is still standing where he first saw the light, and until recently the door lintels bore dates, and the names of the persons who carved them, of upwards of a century ago. It has recently been remodeled, and is now occupied by George C. Anderson.

As a matter of historic interest, to show a portraiture of the home of Somers during his lifetime, and but shortly after the death of his father, I inclose the following advertisement, clipped from Claypoole's 'American Daily Advertiser' for Friday, January 10, 1800.

"To be Rented.

That well-known pleasantly situated place at Great Egg-harbour Inlet, formerly the Residence of Col. Richard Somers, containing four hundred acres of upland and three of meadow and marsh.

The dwelling house is commodious, with suitable out buildings, and well calculated for store and tavern keeping.

N. B. There are four apple and one peach orchards all in good repair; other advantages from nature, of fish, fowl and oysters unexcelled by any place in the country.

Apply to Wm. Jones Keen, Front St., or on the premises."

At the time that Mr. Keen was seeking a tenant for the "Old House at Home," Lieut. Somers was voyaging in the frigate United States with Commodore Barry.

After receiving a preliminary education [Somers first went to school in Philadelphia, and was subsequently sent to Burlington, where there was then an academy of some merit for the period. At the latter place the boy continued until near the time of the death of his father, if not quite down to the day of that event.

There is considerable uncertainty thrown around the precise period when Somers first went to sea. His nearest surviving relative is of opinion that he had never entered upon the profession when he joined the navy, but this opinion is met by the precise knowledge of one of his shipmates in the frigate in which he first served, who affirms that the young man was a very respectable seaman on coming on board. The result of our inquiries is to convince us that Somers must have gone to sea somewhere about the year 1794, or shortly after the death of his father, and when he himself was probably between fifteen and sixteen years of age. The latter period indeed agrees with that named by the relative mentioned, as his age when he went to sea, though it is irreconcilable with the date of the equipment of the man of-war he first joined, and that of his own warrant in the navy.

From the best information in our possession, therefore, we are led to believe that the boy sailed first as a hand and then as a mate, if not as master, on board a coaster, owned by some of his own family, of which more than one plied between Great Egg Harbor and the ports of New York and Philadelphia. This accords, too with his well-known love of adventure and native resolution, as well as his orphaned condition; though he inherited from his father a respectable property, including a portion of the original family estate, as well as of lands in the interior of Pennsylvania.

In his boyhood and youth Somers was remarkable for a chivalrous sense of honor, great mildness of manner and disposition, mingled with a singular firmness of purpose. His uncle, John Somers, who was the head of the family, and as such maintained an authority that was more usual in the last century than it is to-day, is described as an austere man, who was held in great awe by his relatives, and who was accustomed to meet with the greatest deference amongst his kindred, not only for all his commands, but for most of his opinions. The firmness and decision shown by his nephew Richard, however, in a controversy about a dog, in which the uncle was wrong and the boy right, are said to have astonished the whole family, and to have created a profound respect in the senior for the junior, that continued as long as the two lived. Richard could not have been more than twelve when this little incident occurred.

Somers received his warrant as midshipman in the spring of 1798. This was virtually at the commencement of the present navy, the Ganges 24, Capt. Dale, the first vessel that got out, being ordered to sea, May 22d of that year. The Ganges was soon followed by the Constellation 38, and Delaware 20, the three ships cruising on the coast to prevent the depredations committed by the French privateers.

The next vessel out was the United States 44, bearing the broad pennant of Com. John Barry, the senior officer of the service. To this vessel Somers was attached, making his first cruise in her.

The United States was then, as now, one of the finest frigates that floats. Equipped in Philadelphia, then the capital of the country, and the centre of civilization, and commanded by an experienced and excellent officer, no young man could have commenced his professional career under more favorable auspices than was the case with Somers. The ship had for lieutenants, Ross 1st, Mullowney 2d, Barron 3d, Steward 4th. The two latter are now the senior officers of the service. Among his messmates in the steerage, he had for friends and associates Decatur and Caldwell, both Philadelphians. It is a proof that Somers had been previously to sea, that, on joining this ship, he was named as master's mate of the hold, a situation uniformly given in that day to the most experienced and trustworthy midshipman. It was while thus associated that the close connection was generated between Somers and Decatur, which, for the remainder of their joint lives, rendered them generous professional rivals and fast personal friends.

The United States sailed on her first cruise early in July, 1798, going to the eastward, where she collected a small squadron, that had

come out of the ports of New England, and with which she soon after proceeded to the West Indies. She remained cruising in those seas for the remainder of the year as the commanding vessel; Com. Barry having collected a force of some twenty sail under his orders by the commencement of winter. Shortly after Mr. Ross left the ship, and Messrs. Mullowney and Barron were promoted. This occurred in the spring of 1799, when Mr. Stewart became 1st lieutenant of the frigate, Mr. Edward Meade 2d, Somers 3d, Decatur 4th.

Thus the service of Somers, as a midshipman, could not have exceeded a twelvemonth; conclusive evidence that he had been to sea previously to joining the navy, were any other testimony required than that of his shipmates. In the autumn of 1799, the United States sailed from Newport, Rhode Island, for Lisbon, having on board, as commissioners to the French republic, the gentlemen who subsequently arranged the terms of peace. It is probable that Somers, whose previous experience had been in the American seas, crossed the Atlantic for the first time in this cruise. Mr. Stewart being placed in command of the Experiment 12, in the year 1800, Somers ended the war as second lieutenant of the ship he had joined as midshipman about three years before.

The war of 1798 allowed but few opportunities for officers to distinguish themselves. But two frigate actions were fought, and, singularly enough, on the side of the Americans, both fell to the share of the same commander and the same ship, Truxton and the Constellation; leaving nothing but vigilant watchfulness and activity to the lot of the other officers and other vessels. While the United States had no chance for earning laurels, she was always a model cruiser for discipline and seamanship, and the young men who served in her during the quasi-war had no grounds of complaint on the score of either precept or example. They had been in an excellent school, and the "Old Wagoner," as this vessel was afterwards called, turned out as many distinguished officers as any vessel of the day.

At the formation of the peace establishment, in 1801, Somers was returned as the twelfth lieutenant, in a list that then presented only thirty-six officers of rank. The rapid promotion that marked the first few years of the existence of the present marine belongs to the history of the day, and must be ascribed to the occurrence of two wars in quick succession, and to the wants of an infant service. The list alluded to forms a subject of melancholy and yet proud interest to every American who is familiar with this branch of the Republic's annals. It is headed by the name of Charles Stewart, and it closes

with that of Jacob Jones. Hull, Shaw, Chauncy, and Smith precede Somers on this list; Decatur stands next to him; and Dent, Porter, the elder Cassin, Gordon, and Caldwell follow. A long list of names that have since become distinguished, including those of McDonough, Lawrence, the younger Biddle, Perry, the younger Cassin, Trippe, Allen, Burrows, Blakelow, Downes, Crane, Morris, Ridgely, Warrington, the elder Wadsworth, etc., etc., was then to be found among the midshipmen. Not a man below that of the seventeenth captain of the present day (Woodhouse), was then to be found in the Navy Register at all; that of Sloat, now the thirty-third captain, having lost its place in consequence of a resignation. When Commodores Stewart and Hull examine the present register, they find on it but eleven names, besides their own, that were there even when they were made commanders. They both remain captains themselves to this hour!]

Lieut. Somers left a journal of a cruise in the frigate United States, commencing with Dec. 13th, 1800. It contains but little of interest. We will content ourselves with the following quotations:—

"Jan. 1st, 1801, at 3 P. M., departed this life, Wm. McClarry, 2d lieut. of the Marine Corps. Died from a mortification of a small scratch in the leg. At 5 committed his body to the deep with military honors."

"Jan. 2d, 1801. Discovered one of the sails standing for us, kept the ship shaking in the wind; at half-past two she hauled her wind, we then discovered her to be a schooner armed. We tacked in chase of her and made sail. At 3 she fired a gun to the leeward, and hoisted American colours. She tacked several times, and we also, as per log. At half-past 6, being dark, lost sight of her. Tacked ship in chase of the other sail and at 7 brought to the American brig Sally, from New Haven, bound for Martinique, who was captured by the French privateer schooner, Diamaid, the day before—sent the boat and brought 8 French prisoners on board. At 8 saw the French privateer to the leeward, hoisted in the boat and made sail in chase; at 9 hauled on wind, lost sight of the sail; at 11 tacked ship to the northeast, and stood for the prize; at midnight to the southward, at 1 took in the mainsail and hauled down the light sails, at 4 came up with the prize, hauled up the foresail, and at 8 took the prize in tow."

[The United States was laid up in ordinary at the peace of 1801, and there was this noble frigate suffered to remain, until she was again commissioned for the coast service, a few months previously to the war of 1813. Among the vessels that were built to meet the

emergency of the French struggle, was a frigate called the Boston, a vessel that it was usual then to rate as a thirty-two, but was properly a twenty-eight, carrying only twenty-four twelves on her gun-deck. This little ship had fought a spirited action with a heavy French corvette called the Bercean, in the war that had just terminated, and had brought in her antagonist. This circumstance rendered her a favorite, and she was kept in commission at the termination of hostilities, under the command of Captain Daniel McNiell, an officer of whose eccentricities there will be occasion to speak, when we come to the record of his extraordinary career. Somers on quitting the United States, was transferred to the Boston as her first lieutenant. The ship sailed from New York in the summer of 1801, for L'Orient, in France, having on board Chancellor Livingston and suite, the newly appointed legation to that country. After landing the minister, the Boston proceeded to the Mediterranean. The cruise of this ship was remarkable for its entire independence. Capt. McNiell had been ordered to join the Mediterranean squadron, then under the pennant of Com. Dale, and, although he was in that sea during parts of the commands of that officer and his successor Com. Morris, he so successfully eluded both as never to fall in with them; or, if he met the latter at all, it was only for a moment, and near the end of his own cruise. Capt. McNiel, notwithstanding, wanted for neither courage nor activity. He visited many ports, gave frequent convoys, and even went off to Tripoli, the scene of war; but from accident or design, all this was so timed as to destroy every thing like concert and combination. In this cruise Somers had an opportunity of seeing many of the ports of Italy, Spain, and the islands, and doubtless he acquired much of that self-reliance and experience which are so necessary to a seaman in his responsible station of a 1st lieutenant. He was then a very young man, not more than 23; and this was a period of life when such opportunities were of importance. Nor does he seem to have neglected them, as all of his contemporaries speak of his steadiness of character, good sense, amiable and correct deportment, with affection and respect. The Boston returned home at the close of 1802, when Capt. McNiell retired from the service, under the reduction law, and the ship was laid up never to be employed again. The commander subsequently returned to the seas, in the revenue service, but the frigate lay rotting at Washington, until she was burned at the inroad of the enemy, in 1814, a worthless hulk.

At the reduction of the navy in 1801, but one vessel below the rate of a frigate, the Enterprise 12, was retained in the marine.

Most of the sloops that had been used in the French war were clumsy vessels with gun-decks, that had been bought into the service. They were not fit to be preserved, and the department was not sorry to get rid of them. By this time, however, the want of small vessels was much felt in carrying on the Tripolitan war, and a law providing for the construction of four vessels of not more than sixteen guns, passed in the session of 1802–3. These vessels were the Siren 16, Argus 16, Nautilus 12, Vixen 12. As the country at that day had no proper yards, it was customary to assign certain officers to superintend the building and equipping of vessels on the stocks, the selections being commonly made from those it was intended should subsequently serve in them. On this occasion Decatur was attached to the Argus; it being understood he was to take her to the Mediterranean and give her up to Hull, receiving the Enterprise from the latter in exchange, as the junior officer. Stewart was given the Siren, as his due; Smith got the Vixen, and Somers the Nautilus. By this time, or in the spring of 1803, owing to resignations, the latter stood seventh on the list of lieutenants, Smith being one before him, and Decatur one his junior. Stewart and Hull headed the register. Of the thirty-six officers of this rank retained under the reduction law, but twenty-five then remained in service. To-day their number is lowered to three, viz: Stewart, Hull, and Jacob Jones.

The Nautilus, the first and only command of Somers, was a beautiful schooner of about 160 or 170 tons, and mounted twelve 18lb. carronades, with two sixes, having a crew of from 75 to 95 souls. This was a handsome situation for a young sailor of twenty-four, who had followed his profession but about nine years, and who had been in the navy but five, having commenced a midshipman. In that day, however, no one envied Somers, or believed him unduly favored, for he was thought to be an old officer, though he had not been half the time in service which is now employed in the subordinate situations of midshipman and passed midshipman.

The Mediterranean squadron, which sailed in the summer and autumn of 1803, was that which subsequently became so celebrated under the orders of Preble. It consisted of the Constitution 44, Preble's own ship; the Philadelphia, 38, Capt. Bainbridge; Argus 16, first Lieut. Com. Decatur, then Lieut. Com. Hull; Siren 16, Lieut. Com. Stewart; Vixen 12, Lieut. Com. Smith; Enterprise 12, first Lieut. Com. Hull, then Lieut. Com. Decatur; and Nautilus 12, Lieut. Com. Somers. These vessels did not proceed to their station in squadron, but they left home as they got ready. The Enterprise

was already out; but of the ships fitting, the Nautilus was the first equipped, and the first to sail. Somers left America early in the summer, and anchored in Gibraltar Bay on the 27th of July. The remaining vessels arrived at different times, between the last of August and the first of November. After a short stop at Gibraltar, the Nautilus went abaft, giving convoy when required, returning to the Rock in time to meet the commodore in September.

The relief and homeward bound squadrons, or at least that part of the former which had then arrived and was below, and the return ships under Com. Rogers, met at Gibraltar early in September. The state of the relations with Morocco being very precarious, Com. Preble determined to make an effort to avert a new war, and Com. Rogers handsomely consented to aid him; the former proceeded to Tangiers with all the force he could assemble. Here he succeeded in awing the Emperor into a treaty, and in putting a stop to a system of depredations which the subjects of that prince had already commenced. The Nautilus formed a part of the force employed on that occasion, and was particularly useful on account of her light draught of water.

After arranging the difficulty with Morocco, Preble made a formal declaration of the blockade of Tripoli, before which he believed that the Philadelphia and Vixen were then cruising; though, unknown to him, the latter had been temporarily detached, and the Philadelphia was in possession of the enemy. From this time until the succeeding spring, the Nautilus was employed in convoying, or in carrying orders necessary to the preparations that were making for the coming season; but in March she formed a part of the blockading force in front of Tripoli. In consequence of the captivity of Capt. Bainbridge, Lieut. Com. Stewart was the officer second in rank in the squadron, and he was consequently kept much upon the coast in command, while Preble was carrying on negotiations, by means of which he obtained the gunboats and other supplies necessary to the attacks he contemplated. In March, 1804, while the Siren and Nautilus were alone maintaining the blockade, the two vessels had been driven to the eastward of their port by the gale, and early in the morning, while returning, they made a warlike looking brig lying to off the place, with which she was evidently in communication. Signal was made to the Nautilus to stand close in and watch the gunboats, while the Siren ran alongside the stranger, who was captured for a violation of the blockade. The prize proved to be a privateer called the Transfer, with an English commission. She carried 16 guns and 80 men, and

hailed from Malta, but in fact belonged to the Bashaw of Tripoli; her papers having been obtained through the Tripolitan consul in Malta, who was a native of that island. The vessel was appraised, equipped by the squadron, and used in the war, having her name changed to the Scourge. Owing to certain scruples of Mr. Jefferson on the subject of blockades, the vessel was not condemned until the war of 1812, nor were the captors paid their prize-money until Somers had been dead nearly eleven years.

Between the time of the capture of the Transfer and the month of July, the Nautilus was much employed by the commodore, going below and visiting different ports in Sicily. On the 20th of that month Somers sailed from Malta, in company with the Constitution, the Enterprise, two bomb ketches, and six gunboats that had been obtained from the Neapolitans bound off Tripoli. On the arrival of the commodore, his whole force was collected, and that series of short but brilliant operations commenced, which has rendered the service of this season so remarkable in the history of the American navy.

A spirit of high emulation existed among the young commanders by whom Preble now found himself supported. Hull was the oldest in years, and he had hardly reached the prime of life, while Stewart, Smith, Somers, and Decatur were all under five and twenty. With the exception of the commodore, no commanding officer was married, and most of them were bound together by the ties of intimate friendships. In a word, their lives, as yet, had been prosperous; the past left little to complain of, the future was full of hope; and there had been little opportunity for that spirit of selfishness which is so apt to generate quarrels, to get possession of minds so free and temperaments so ardent.

This is the proper place to allude to a private adventure of Somers, about the existence of which there would seem to be no doubt, though like so much that belonged to this interesting man, its details are involved in obscurity. While at Syracuse, where the American vessels made their principal rendezvous, he was walking in the vicinity of the town in company with two brother officers, when five men carrying swords, who were afterwards ascertained to be soldiers of the garrison, made an attack on the party with an intent to rob. One of the gentlemen was provided with a dirk, but Somers and the other were totally unarmed. The officer with the dirk used the weapon so vigorously as soon to bring down one assailant, while Somers grappled with another. In the struggle Somers seized the blade of his antagonist's sword, and was severely cut in the hand by the efforts of the

robber to recover it; but the latter did not succeed, the weapon being wrested from him, and plunged into his own body. This decided the matter, the three remaining robbers taking to flight. The dead bodies were carried into the town and recognized. This adventure is believed to have occurred while the Nautilus was absent on her last visit to Sicily, though it may have been of older date; possibly as old as the time when Somers was in the Boston. We think the latter improbable, however, as the circumstance seems to be unknown to his nearest relatives in this country, which would have been the case had it taken place previously to his last visit to America. Our information comes from an intimate friend, who received the facts from Somers himself, but who was not at Syracuse at the moment the attempt to rob occurred.

A gale of wind prevented the American vessels from commencing operations before the 3d of August. On that day Com. Preble stood in within a league of Tripoli, with a pleasant breeze from the eastward. Here he wore ship, with his head off the land, and signalled all the vessels to pass within hail of the Constitution. As the brigs and schooners passed the frigate, each commander was ordered to prepare for an attack. Everything was previously arranged, and the ardor of the young men under the orders of Preble being of the highest character, in one hour every man and craft were ready for the contemplated service.

The harbor of Tripoli lies in a shallow indentation of the coast, being tolerably protected against easterly and westerly gales by the formation of the land, while a reef of rocks, which stretches for a mile and a half in a northeasterly course, commencing at the town itself, breaks the seas that roll in from the northward. This reef extends nearly half a mile from the walls, entirely above water, and is of sufficient height and width to receive water batteries, containing the Lazaretto and one or two forts. It is this commencement of the reef which constitutes what is usually termed the mole, and behind it lies the harbor proper. At its termination is a narrow opening in the reef which is called the western entrance, through which it is possible for a ship to pass, though the channel is not more than two hundred feet in width. Beyond the passage the rocks reappear, with intervals between them, though lying on shoals with from one half to five and a half feet of water on them. The line of rocks and shoals extends more than a mile outside of the western entrance. Beyond its termination is the principal entrance to Tripoli, which is of sufficient width though not altogether free from shoals. The distance across the bay,

from the northeastern extremity of the rocks to what is called the English fort, on the main land, is about two thousand yards, or quite within the effective range of heavy guns. In the bottom of the bay, or at the southeastern angle of the town, stands the Bashaw's castle, a work of some size and force. It lies rather more than half a mile from the western entrance, and somewhat more than a mile from the outer extremity of the reef. Thus anything within the rocks is commanded by all the water defences of the place, while shot from the castle, and more especially from the natural mole, would reach a considerable distance into the offing. Some artificial works aided in rendering the northwestern corner of the harbor still more secure, and this place is usually called the galley mole. Near this is an ordinary landing, and it is the spot that may properly be termed the port.

The Tripolitans fully expected the attack of the 2d of August, though they little anticipated its desperate character, or its results. They had anchored nine of their large, well-manned gunboats just outside of what are called the Harbor Rocks, or the northeastern extremity of the reef, evidently with a view of flanking the expected attack on the town, which, lying on the margin of the sea, is much exposed, though the rocks in its front were well garnished with heavy guns. Accustomed to cannonading at the distance of a mile, these gunboats expected no warmer service, more especially as a nearer approach would bring their assailants within reach of the castle and batteries. In addition to the nine boats to the eastward, there were five others which also lay along the line of rocks nearer to the western entrance, and within pistol shot of the batteries in that part of the defences. Within the reef were five more gunboats and several heavy galleys, ready to protect the outer line of gunboats at need, forming a reserve.

Com. Preble had borrowed only six gunboats from the King of Naples, and these were craft that were much inferior in size and force to the generality of those used by the enemy. Each of these boats had a few Neapolitans in her to manage her on ordinary occasions, but, for the purposes of action, officers and crews were detailed from the different vessels of the squadron. These six boats were divided into two divisions; to the command of one was assigned Lieut. Com. Somers, while Lieut. Com. Decatur led the other. Somers was thought to be the senior lieutenant of the two, though Decatur was at this time actually a captain, and Somers himself was a master commandant, as well as Stewart, Hull, and Smith, though the intelligence of these

promotions had not yet reached the squadron. The three boats commanded by Somers were—

No. 1. Lieut. Com. Somers, of the Nautilus.

No. 2. Lieut. James Decatur, of the Nautilus.

No. 3. Lieut. Blake, of the Argus.

Decatur had under his immediate orders—

No. 4. Lieut. Com. Decatur, of the Enterprise.

No. 5. Lieut. Joseph Bainbridge, of the Enterprise.

No. 6. Lieut. Trippe, of the Vixen.

Somers had with him in No. 1 a crew from his own schooner, and Messrs. Ridgely and Miller, midshipmen; the former being the present Com. Ridgely. Decatur had the late Lieut. Jonathan Thorn, who was subsequently blown up on the northwest coast of America, and the modest, but lion-hearted McDonough. Trippe had with him in No. 6 the late Com. J. D. Henley and the late Capt. Deacon, both then midshipmen. Of all these gallant young men Ridgely alone survives!

It was the intention of Preble to attack the eastern division of the enemy's boats with his own flotilla, while the ketches bombarded the town, and the frigate and sloop covered both assaults with their round and grape shot. With this object in view, the whole force stood in towards the place at half-past one, the gunboats in tow. Half an hour later the latter were cast off and formed in advance, while the brigs and schooners, six in number, formed a line without them, and the ketches began to throw their shells. The batteries were instantly in a blaze, and the Americans immediately opened from all their shipping in return.

Circumstances had thrown the divisions of gunboats commanded by Somers to leeward of that commanded by Decatur. It was on the right of the little line, and, under ordinary occurrences, it would have been the most exposed, being nearest to the batteries and the weight of the Tripolitan fire, but Decatur gave a new character to the whole affair by his extraordinary decision and intrepidity. The manner in which this chivalrous officer led on in a hand-to-hand conflict will be related in his own biography, but it may be well to state here that he was sustained only by Trippe, in No. 6, and his brother James, in No. 2; the latter being far enough to windward to fetch into the easternmost division of the Tripolitan boats, though belonging to the division commanded by Somers. No. 5, Lieut. Bainbridge, was disabled in approaching, though she continued to engage, and finally grounded on the rocks. Deprived of the support of No. 2, by the

successful effort of her gallant commander to close with the easternmost division, and of that of No. 3, in consequence of a signal of recall that was made from the Constitution, which arrested the movements of that boat, though it was either unseen or disregarded by all the others, Somers found himself alone, within the line of small vessels, and much exposed to the fire of the leeward division of the enemy's boats, as well as to that of the nearest battery. The struggle to windward was too fierce to last long, and Preble fearing that some of the gunboats might be pushed into extreme peril, made the signal of recall, at least an hour before the firing ceased, No. 1, with Somers and his brave companions being all that time in the very forlorn hope of the affair so far as missiles were concerned. As soon as it had been ascertained that he could not fetch into the most weatherly division of the enemy, Somers had turned like a lion on that to leeward, and engaged the whole of that division, five in number and at least of five times his own force, within pistol-shot, one party being sustained by some of the vessels outside, and the other by the batteries and the craft within the rocks. In consequence of the direction of the wind, the only means, short of anchoring, that could be devised to prevent No. 1 from drifting directly down, as it might be, into the enemy's hands, was to keep the sweeps backing astern, while the long gun of the boat delivered bags of musket-balls filled with a thousand bullets each. In the end, the enemy was obliged to make off, and Somers was extricated from his perilous position by the approach of the Constitution, which enabled him to obey the commodore's signal and bring out his boat in triumph.

Although the extraordinary nature of the hand-to-hand conflict in which Decatur had been engaged threw a sort of shade over the efforts of the other vessels employed that day, the feeling of admiration for the conduct of Somers in particular was very general in the squadron. Apart from the struggles with the pike, sword, and bayonet, his position was much the most critical of any vessel engaged in the attack, and no man could have behaved better than he was admitted to have done. In short, next to Nos. 4 and 6, No. 1, it was conceded, had most distinguished herself, although No. 2, under James Decatur, did as well as the circumstances would allow. One of the best evidences which can be given of the spirit of this attack is to be found in the trifling nature of the loss the Americans suffered. But fourteen men were killed and wounded in all the vessels, and of these thirteen were on board the gunboats. No. 4, notwithstanding her great exposure, had only two casualties.

The Americans employed themselves between the 3d and 7th of August in altering the rigs of the three boats they had taken in their first assault, and in equipping them for service. They were all ready by the morning of the last day, and were taken into the line as Nos. 7, 8, and 9. At half past two the ketches began again to throw their shells, and the nine gunboats opened a heavy fire, still in two divisions commanded as before, though the enemy this time kept his small vessels too far within the rocks to be liable to another attempt at boarding. While No. 1 was advancing to her station on this occasion, Somers stood leaning against her flag-staff. In this position he saw a shot flying directly in a line for him, and bowed his head to avoid it. The shot cut the flag-staff, and on measuring afterwards it was rendered certain that he escaped death only by the timely removal. The boats were under fire three hours in this attack; one of them, commanded by Lieut. Caldwell, of the Siren, having been blown up. Between 5 and 6 P. M. the brigs and schooners took the lighter craft in tow, and carried them beyond the reach of the batteries. In this affair Somers's boat was hulled by a heavy shot, and was much exposed.

A strange sail hove in sight near the close of this attack, and she proved to be the John Adams 28, Capt. Chauncey, last from home. This ship brought out the commissions already mentioned, as having been issued some time previously. By this promotion, Somers became a master commandant, or a commander, as the grade is now termed; a rank in the navy which corresponds to that of a major in the army, and which entitles its possessor to the command of a sloop of war. Several of these commanders were made at this time, of whom Somers ranked as the seventh, which was precisely the number he had previously occupied on the list of lieutenants. There was a peculiarity about this promotion which is worthy of comment, and which goes to show the irregularities that have been practised in a service which is generally understood to be governed and protected by the most precise principles and enactments.

Certainly some, and it is believed that *all*, the commissions of commanders, bestowed upon the service in 1804, were issued without referring the nominations to the Senate for confirmation. We have examined one of these commissions, and find that it contains no allusion to that body, as is always done in those cases in which a confirmation has been had; and the omission raises a curious question as to the legality of the appointments. As the rank of commander in the navy has never been declared by law to be one of those offices in

which the appointing power is exclusively bestowed on the President, or a head of a department, it follows that it comes within the ordinary provision of the constitution. Now, in all the latter cases, the power of the executive to appoint is confined to that of filling vacancies which occur in the recess of the Senate, and the commission issued, even under this strictly constitutional authority, is valid only until the expiration of the succeeding session of that body. Thus three questions present themselves as to the legality of these commissions. First, that the grade of masters and commanders had been indirectly, if not directly, abolished by the reduction law of 1801; and, such being the fact, the constitution giving to Congress full powers to pass laws for the government of the army and navy, it may well be questioned if the President and Senate united had any legal right to re-establish the grade by the mere use of the appointing power. Second, whether such a vacancy existed as to authorize the President to fill it in the recess of the Senate, had Congress renewed the rank by law, which, however, is believed not to have been the fact; and, third, whether the commissions actually granted, being without the advice and consent of the Senate, could be legal, after the close of the succeeding session of that body, under any circumstances. As to the last objection, it is understood all the gentlemen who received these commissions continued to serve under them until they died, resigned, or were promoted.

The grave considerations connected with courts martial, commands, and other legal consequences, which unavoidably offer themselves when we are made acquainted with so extraordinary a state of facts, are materially lessened by the circumstances that all the gentlemen thus irregularly promoted were officers in the navy under their former commissions, and that no relative rank was disturbed. Then if Messrs. Stewart and Hull were not legally the two oldest commanders in the service, they were the oldest lieutenants, and all the other commanders being in the same dilemma with themselves, their relative rank remained precisely as it would have done had no new commissions been granted. So also as regards courts; the judge having a right to sit as a lieutenant, unless, indeed, the informality of annexing a wrong rank to the order might raise a legal objection.

That so gross an irregularity should have arisen under a government that professes to be one purely of law, excites our wonder, and this so much the more, when we remember it occurred in a service in which life itself may be the penalty of error. The explanation is to be found in the infancy of the establishments, and in practices in

which principles remained to be settled, aided by the known moral courage and exceeding personal popularity of the statesman who then presided in the councils of the Republic. While Jefferson affected, and perhaps felt, a profound respect for legality, he is known to have used the power he wielded with great political fearlessness, and to have considered himself as the head of a new school in the administration of the government, which did not always hesitate about the introduction of new rules of conduct. To these remarks, however, it must in justice be added, that no party or personal views could have influenced the appointments in question, which, apart from the irregularity of their manner, were certainly recognized equally by justice and the wants of the service, and which were made in perfect conformity with the rules of promotion as observed under the severest principles of military preferment. They prove even more in favor of the statesman, as they show that he did not deserve all the accusations of hostility to this branch of the national defences that were heaped upon him; but rather that he was disposed to stretch his authority to foster and advance it. The introduction of a new class of vessels, too, required the revival of a class of officers of a rank proper to command them; and, though we wish never to see illegality countenanced in the management of interests as delicate as those of a marine, it is desirable to see the proper authorities of the country imitate this feature of the case, now that the Republic has fleets which flag officers alone can ever lead with a proper degree of dignity and authority.

It was the 28th of August before another attack was made on Tripoli, in which Somers participated. The ketches bombarded it on the night of the 24th, but finding little impression made by this mode of assault, Commodore Preble determined to renew the cannonading. On this occasion Captain Somers led one division of the gunboats, as before, while Captain Decatur led the other; the latter having five of these craft under his orders, and the former three. The approach was made under the cover of darkness, all the boats anchoring near the rocks, where they opened a heavy fire on the shipping, castle, and town. The brigs and schooners assisted in this attack, and at daylight the frigate stood in, and opened her batteries. The Tripolitan galleys and gunboats, thirteen in all, were principally opposed to the eight American gunboats, which did not retire until they had expended their ammunition. One Tripolitan was sunk, two more were run on shore, and all were finally driven into the mole by the frigate.

On the 3d of September, a fourth and last attack was made on

Tripoli by the gunboats, aided by all the other vessels. The Turkish boats did not wait, as before, to be assaulted off the town, but, accompanied by the galleys, they placed themselves under Fort English, and a new battery that had been built near it, with an intention to draw the American's shot in that direction. This change of disposition induced Preble to send Captains Decatur and Somers, with the gunboats, covered by the brigs and schooners, into the harbor's mouth, while the ketches bombarded more to leeward. On this occasion, Somers was more than an hour hotly engaged, pressing the enemy into his own port.

The season was now drawing near a close, and the arrival of reinforcements from America had been expected in vain for several weeks. It was during this interval that a plan for destroying the enemy's flotilla as it lay anchored in the innermost harbor was conceived, and preparations were soon made for putting it into execution. The conception of this daring scheme has been claimed for Somers himself, and not without a share of reason. There existed between him and Decatur a singular professional competition that was never permitted, however, to cool their personal friendships. The great success of the latter in his daring assaults stimulated Somers to attempt some exploit equally adventurous, and none better than the one adopted then offered. The five attacks on Tripoli, with the vigorous blockade, had produced a sensible effect on the tone of the bashaw, and it was hoped that a blow as appalling as that now meditated might at once produce a peace. The delicacy that a commander would naturally feel about proposing a service so desperate to a subordinate, renders it highly probable that the idea originated with Somers himself, who thus secured the office of endeavoring to execute it. It is proper to add, however, that Commodore Preble says that the project had long been in contemplation, though he does not say who suggested it. The plan was as follows: The ketch that had originally been taken by Decatur in the enterprise, and in which he had subsequently carried the Philadelphia frigate, was still in the squadron. She had been named the Intrepid, for the brilliant occasion on which she had first been used, but had since fallen from her high estate, having latterly been employed in bringing water and stores from Malta. This craft had been constructed for a gun vessel by the French in their expedition against Egypt; from their service she had passed into that of Tripoli; had fallen into the hands of warriors from the new world; by them had been used in one of the most brilliant exploits of naval warfare, and was now about to terminate her career in

another of the most desperate and daring character. It was proposed to fit up the ketch in the double capacity of fire-ship and infernal, and to send her into the inner harbor of Tripoli by the western passage, there to explode in the very centre of the vessels of the Turks. As her deck was to be covered with missiles, and a large quantity of powder was to be used, it was hoped that the town and castle would suffer not less than the shipping. The panic created by such an assault, made in the dead of night, it was fondly hoped would produce an instant peace, and, more especially, the liberation of the crew of the Philadelphia. The latter object was deemed one of the highest interest to the whole force before Tripoli, and was never lost sight of in all their operations.

Com. Preble having determined upon his plan, Somers received orders to commence preparations; a duty in which he had the advice and assistance of Decatur, Stewart, and other commanders of the squadron, for all these ardent and gallant young men felt a common sympathy in his daring, and an equal interest in his anticipated triumph. The first step was to prepare the ketch for the desperate service in which she was to be engaged. With this object a small apartment was planked up in the broadest part of her hold, or just forward of her principal mast; this was rendered as secure as was thought necessary against accidents. Into this room a hundred barrels of gunpowder were emptied in bulk. A train was led aft to the cabin window, through a tube, and, by some accounts, another was led into the fore peak. A port fire, graduated to burn a certain number of minutes, was affixed to the train, and a body of light, splintered wood was collected in another receptacle abaft the magazine, which was to be set on fire; with the double purpose of making certain of the explosion, and of keeping the enemy aloof, under the apprehension of its flames. On the deck of the ketch, around the mast, and immediately over the magazine, were piled a quantity of shells of different sizes with their fuses prepared, in the expectation that the latter would ignite and produce the usual explosion. The number of these shells has been variously stated at from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty, the size ranging from nine to thirteen and a half inches. The best information, however, would seem to place the number below two hundred. Some accounts give the quantity of powder as high as 15,000 pounds, which was probably near the truth.

Two boats were to accompany the ketch, one, an exceedingly fast rowing four-oared boat, being lent for the purpose by the Siren, and the other a six-oared cutter of the Constitution. The service requiring but few men, no more were employed than was necessary to pull the two boats. To have gone in with a single boat would have been unnecessarily hazardous, as a shot might have disabled her, while the chances of escape were nearly doubled by adding a second, at the time that the additional men did not more than make an ordinary crew for a Mediterranean craft of the size of the Intrepid. A second officer, however, was thought necessary, and Lieut. Henry Wadsworth, of the Constitution, volunteering, his offer was accepted. Mr. Joseph Israel, of the same ship, who had just been promoted, was also anxious to be of the party; but Com. Preble deeming his assistance unnecessary, permission to go was refused him. Thus it was intended that the adventurers should be limited to twelve, of whom ten were common seamen, one lieutenant, and the other a commander, or Somers himself.

It now became necessary to obtain volunteers for the Siren's boat, and a call for this purpose was made by Somers on the crew of his own vessel, the Nautilus. Notwithstanding the desperate character of the service, when the want was stated to the people of the little vessel, every man in her offered himself to go. This compelled their superior to make a selection. The other six seamen were obtained from the Constitution, and were chosen, it is believed, by Mr. Wadsworth, under the supervision of the ship's first lieutenant, who at that time was the late Capt. Gordon. The four men belonging to the Nautilus were James Simms, Thomas Tompline, James Harris, and William Keith; all seamen rated. Mr. Wadsworth took with him from the Constitution, William Harrison, Robert Clark, Hugh M'Cormick, Jacob Williams, Peter Penner, and Isaac W. Downes, all seamen rated also.

Several days were necessary to complete all these arrangements, more especially to equip the ketch in the manner described, and the action of the third had taken place even after the Intrepid was ready. Somers made one or two attempts to go in before the night finally selected, but they were abandoned on account of the lightness of the air. At length there were appearances in and about the harbor that induced him to think that the movements of the fire vessel were distrusted, and, fearful of detection, he decided to go in on the night of the 4th of September, if the thing were at all practicable.

Several interviews had taken place between Preble and Somers in the preparations for the attempt. On one occasion the commodore burnt a port-fire in order to ascertain its time, and when it was consumed he asked Somers if he thought the boats could get out of

reach of the shells within the few minutes it was burning. "I think we can, sir," answered Somers. Preble looked intently at the young man a moment, and then inquired if he should have the time reduced, or the port-fire made shorter. "I ask for no port-fire at all, sir," was the reply, firmly but quietly expressed.

After this interview, Somers expressed his determination not to allow himself to be captured. The commodore had felt it to be his duty to point out the great importance of not letting so large an amount of powder fall into the enemy's hands, the Tripolitans being thought to be short of ammunition, and all the circumstances united had a tendency to increase the feeling of stern determination in the minds of the two officers who were to go in. Both were singularly quiet men in their ordinary habits, perfectly free from anything like noisy declarations or empty boastings of what they intended to perform, and their simple announcement of their intentions not to be taken, appears to have made a deep impression among their brethren in arms.

On the afternoon of the 4th of September, Somers prepared to take his final departure from the Nautilus, with a full determination to carry the ketch into Tripoli that night. Previous to quitting his own vessel, however, he thought it would be proper to point out the desperate nature of the service to the four men he had selected, that their services might be perfectly free and voluntary. He told them he wished no man to accompany him who would not prefer being blown up to being taken; that such was his own determination, and that he wished all who went with him to be of the same way of thinking. The boat's crew gave three cheers in answer, and each man is said to have separately asked to be selected to apply the match. Once assured of the temper of his companions, Somers took leave of his officers, the boats crew doing the same, shaking hands and expressing their feelings as if they felt assured of their fates in advance. This was done in good faith, and yet cheerfully, and of all the desperate service undertaken by that devoted squadron, none was ever entered upon with so many forebodings of the fatal consequences to those concerned in it. Each of the four men made his will verbally; disposing of his effects among his shipmates like those who are about to die with disease.

It would seem that the Constitution's boat did not join the ketch until it was dusk. When the two crews were mustered, it was found that Mr. Israel had managed to get out of the frigate and to join the party; whether by collusion, or not, it is now impossible to say.

Finding him on board, and admiring his determination to make one of the party, Somers consented to his remaining. One account says that he was sent by Preble with a final order, but it is hardly probable that Somers would have allowed him to remain under such circumstances. He was more likely to be smuggled in by means of the cutter, and to be kept when there was no boat in which he could be sent back. The night of the 4th was not particularly dark, though it could scarcely be accounted clear. The stars were visible, but there was a haze on the water that rendered objects more uncertain than they would otherwise have been. In this respect the light was favorable enough, as the rocks could be seen, while the real character of the ketch would not be so likely to be discovered from the shore. The wind was light, from the eastward, but fair.

Several of Somers's friends visited him on board the Intrepid before she got under way. Among them were Stewart and Decatur, with whom he had commenced his naval career in the United States. These three young men, then about twenty-five each, were Philadelphia-bred sailors, and had been intimately associated for the last six years. They all knew that the enterprise was one of extreme hazard, and the two who were to remain behind felt a deep interest in the fate of him who was to go in. Somers was grave, and entirely without any affectation of levity or indifference, but he maintained his usual tranquil and quiet manner. After some conversation, he took a ring from his finger and breaking it into three pieces gave each of his companions one, while he retained the third himself. As the night shut in, three gunboats were seen at anchor a short distance within the western entrance, by which the Intrepid was to pass, and Decatur, who felt a strong anxiety for the success of his friend, admonished Somers to take care they did not board him, as it was the intention to carry the ketch some distance within them. To this Somers quietly replied that the Turks had got to be so shy that he thought they would be more likely to cut and run on his approach than to advance and meet him.

It was eight o'clock in the evening before the Intrepid lifted her anchor; the Argus, Vixen, and Nautilus weighing and standing in, in company. The night was sufficiently advanced to cover this movement, and all four vessels stood down towards the rocks under their canvas. The last person who left the ketch was Lieut. Washington Reed, then first of the Nautilus. This officer did not quit his commander until it was thought necessary for him to rejoin the vessel of which he was now in charge. When he went over the side of the

Intrepid, all communication between the gallant spirits she contained and the rest of the world ceased. At that time everything seemed propitious; Somers was cheerful, though calm; and perfect order and method prevailed in the little craft. The leave-taking was affectionate and serious with the officers, though the common men appeared to be in high spirits. This was about nine o'clock.

The Argus and Vixen lay off at a little distance from the rocks to attack the galleys or gunboats, should either attempt to follow the party out on their retreat, while the Nautilus shortened sail and accompanied the ketch as close in as was deemed prudent, with the special intention of bringing off the boats. Lieut. Reed directed the present Com. Ridgely, then one of the Nautilus's midshipmen, to watch the ketch's movements with a night-glass; and, as this order was strictly complied with, it is almost certain that this officer was the last person of the American squadron who saw the vessel. It was thought she was advancing slowly to the last moment, though the distance and the obscurity render this fact a little doubtful.

Preble had directed the Siren to weigh and stand in, shortly after the other vessels left him, and in obeying the orders he received, Capt. Steward kept more in the offing than the vessels which preceded him. As the direction of the western entrance and the inner harbor were known, every eye in this brig was riveted in that quarter in silent suspense. It was not long before the enemy began to fire at the ketch, which, by this time, was quite near the batteries, though the reports were neither rapid nor numerous. At this moment, near ten o'clock, Capt. Steward and Lieut. Carrol were standing in the Siren's gangway looking intently towards the place where the ketch was known to be, when the latter exclaimed, "Look! see the light!" At this instant a light was seen passing and waving, as if a lantern were carried by some person in quick motion along a vessel's deck. Then it sunk from view. Half a minute may have elapsed, when the whole firmament was lighted with a fiery glow, a burning mast, with its sails, was seen in the air, the whole harbor was momentarily illuminated, the awful explosion came, and a darkness like that of doom succeeded. The whole was over in less than a minute; the flame, the quaking of towers, the reeling of ships, and even the bursting of shells, of which most fell in the water, though some lodged on the rocks. The firing ceased, and from that instant Tripoli passed the night in a stillness as profound as that in which the victims of this frightful explosion have lain from that fatal hour to this.

The Nautilus showed lights in hopes to guide the retreating boats

to her side; all eyes in the squadron looked in vain for the expected signal; a moaning gun occasionally was heard from the frigate, a fitting knell for such a disaster, but in vain. No one ever came back from the ill-fated Intrepid to relate the history of her loss. The Argus, Vixen, and Nautilus hovered near the rocks until the sun arose, but nothing was discovered to throw any light on the manner in which the ketch was lost. The gunboats anchored near the pass had been moved; one, it was thought, had entirely disappeared, and two or three more were hauled ashore as if shattered.

In the American squadron the opinion was general that Somers and his determined companions had blown themselves up to prevent capture. In the absence of certainty, facts were imagined to render such a desperate step probable if not necessary. It was supposed that gunboats had advanced to board the ketch, and that Somers had fired the trains in preference to falling into the hands of the Tripolitans, or allowing them to get possession of the powder. Such appears to have been the opinion of Com. Preble, who reported as much to the government; and the country, receiving its impression from this source, has long entertained the same idea. A few, however, of the more thoughtful have always doubted, and subsequent discoveries have rendered these doubts more and more probable.

Among the American prisoners in Tripoli was a surgeon's mate of the name of Cowdery, now the oldest surgeon in the navy, who was permitted to go very much at large in the town, his professional services being found useful. From this gentleman, from Capt. Bainbridge's private journal, and from other sources equally credible, the following interesting facts have been obtained, leaving no question of their accuracy:—

In the first place, neither the works, the town, nor the Tripolitans themselves, appear to have suffered any injury by the explosion. Captain Bainbridge, in his journal, where he speaks of the explosion, says: "Which unfortunate scheme did no damage whatever to the Tripolitans; nor did it appear even to heave them into confusion." The bashaw, being desirous of ascertaining how many Americans had been lost in the explosion, offered a dollar for each body that could be discovered. This produced the desired effect, and by the 6th, the dead were all brought up. The bottom of the ketch had drifted among the rocks, on the north side of the round battery, which is near the western entrance, and there it grounded. In the wreck, two bodies were found. The Constitution's cutter, or the six-oared boat, had drifted on the beach, a short distance to the westward of

the town. One body was in it. Six more bodies were found on the shore to the southward, and the remaining four were discovered floating in the harbor. This makes the entire number of the thirteen who were lost in the ketch. Captain Bainbridge describes the six dead whom he saw as "being so much disfigured, it was impossible to recognize any human feature known to us, or even to distinguish an officer from a seaman." Those six bodies were the two found in the wreck, and the four floating in the harbor. But Mr. Cowdery was more successful. He selected three of the bodies as those of officers, being guided by some fragments of dress still remaining on them, and still more by the delicate appearance of their hands. As this was just the number of the officers who were actually lost, and the Americans in Tripoli were then entirely ignorant of the character of the party sent in, it leaves scarcely a doubt that this gentleman decided accurately. Indeed, if the palms of the hands were not much injured, it would not be easy to make a mistake in such a matter; and any parts of the dress would be almost as safe guides. The ten seamen were buried on the beach, outside the town and near the walls; while the three officers were interred in the same grave, on the plain beyond, or cable's length to the southward and eastward of the castle. Small stones were placed at the four corners of this last grave, to mark its site; but they were shortly after removed by the Turks, who refused to let what they conceived to be a Christian monument disfigure their land. Here, then, lie the remains of Somers and his two gallant friends; and it might be well to instruct the commander of some national cruiser to search for their bones, that they might be finally incorporated with the dust of their native land. Their identity would at once be established by the number of the skeletons, and the friends of the deceased might find a melancholy consolation in being permitted to drop a tear over the spot in which they would be finally entombed.

The facts related leave little doubt that Com. Preble was mistaken in, at least, a portion of his conjectures. That no Turks suffered, is shown by the direct testimony of Captain Bainbridge's journal, a record made at that time, and that, too, under circumstances which will not admit of mistakes. This truth is also corroborated by other convincing testimony. Those who saw the explosion, saw no signs of any vessel near the ketch at the time it occurred, nor were the vestiges of any wreck, but that of the Intrepid, to be seen in the harbor. The officer who saw the ketch to the last moment, by means of the glass, is not understood to have seen anything near her, and the thirteen bodies found, the precise number of the Americans

known to have been lost, go to confirm the fact. It adds value to the testimony, too, that a written memorial of this very number of the dead was made, before the prisoners in Tripoli had any information concerning the force of the party sent in from the squadron.

Nor is there sufficient reason for supposing that the Americans blew themselves up on this occasion. That Somers went in with a full determination to put in force this desperate expedient in the event of its becoming necessary to prevent capture, is beyond dispute; but there is no proof of the existence of the necessity. To suppose the *match* would have been applied, except in the last emergency, is to accuse him who did it, with want of coolness: a virtue that Captain Somers possessed in an eminent degree; and this emergency could hardly have existed without some of the enemy being near enough to suffer by the explosion. The whole party was accustomed to fire, and it is scarcely possible that they could have been driven to this desperate step by means of injury received in this manner, as they had their boats for a flight when required. There was a vague rumor that most of the bodies were perforated with grape shot, and a conjecture was made that the survivors fired the train, in order to prevent the Turks from getting possession of the powder. But the report can be traced to no sufficient authority, and it is not probable that so many would have suffered as to prevent the unhurt from using the boats and train in the mode originally intended. But one man was found in the Constitution's cutter, and he, doubtless, was the boat sitter, who probably lost his life at his post. This indicates anything but hurry or alarm.

It is also certain that the splinter-room was not lighted, as its flame would have been both quick and bright; and with a thousand anxious eyes on watch, it could not fail to have been seen. This circumstance goes farther to show that no gunboat or galley could have been approaching at the time she exploded, one of the purposes of these splinters being to keep the enemy aloof, through the dread of a fire vessel. To suppose a neglect of using the splinter-room, in a case of necessity, would be to accuse the party of the same want of coolness as is inferred by the supposition of their blowing themselves up when no foe was near. Both were morally impossible, with such a man as Somers. Admitting that no Tripolitan vessel was near the Intrepid, and still insisting that the train was fired by the Americans, no reason can be given why the preparations for the safety of the latter's crew should not have been used. The Constitution's cutter was found with its keeper alone in it, but of the Siren's boat

we have no account. The latter was probably alongside the ketch and destroyed; it may have been sunk by a falling shell; or it may have been privately appropriated to himself by some Turk. That no one was in it, however, is shown by the twelve bodies that were found out of the boats; for, if manned, and a few yards from the ketch, the crew would have been blown into its bottom, and not into the water.

Abandoning the idea that the Intrepid was intentionally blown up by Somers and his party, we have the alternatives of believing the disaster to have been the result of the fire of the enemy, or the consequences of an accident. The latter is possible, but the former appears to us to be much the more probable. The light seen by Capt. Stewart and Lieut. Carroll, taken in connection with the circumstance that the explosion occurred immediately after, and apparently at the precise spot, is certainly an incident worthy of our consideration, though it is not easy to see how this light could have produced the calamity. Accidents are much less likely to happen on board such a vessel, than on ordinary occasions, every care being taken to prevent them. As the intention was to fire the splinters, all caution was doubtless used to see that no loose powder was lying about, and that the flames should not communicate with the train, except at the right moment, and in the proper manner. Still an accident from this source might have occurred, through some unforeseen agency. If this light was really on board the ketch it was probably carried from aft, where it was under the eye of the officers, to the main hatch, in order to kindle the splinters, a step that it was about time to take. Com. Preble, in his official letter, adverts to the circumstance that this splinter-room had not been set on fire when the ketch blew up, as a proof that the party had been induced to act on an emergency; for he always reasoned as if they blew themselves up; believing that the Intrepid was surrounded, and that many of the enemy were killed. Reasoning on the same circumstance, with the knowledge we now possess that no Turks were near, or that any suffered, and it goes to show that the explosion occurred at a moment when it was not expected by Somers, who would not have neglected to fire this room, in any ordinary case. If the accident had its rise on board the ketch, it probably occurred in the attempt to take this preliminary step.

But the Intrepid may have been blown up, by means of a shot from the enemy. This is the most probable solution of the catastrophe, and the one which is the most consoling to the friends of the sufferers, and which ought to be the most satisfactory to the nation. Commodore

Preble says, "on entering the harbor several shot were fired at her (the Intrepid) from the batteries." The western entrance, in or near which the ketch blew up, is within pistol-shot of what is called the Spanish fort, or, indeed, of most of the works on and about the mole. Even the bashaw's castle lies within fair canister range of this spot, and, prepared as the Turks were for any desperate enterprise on the part of the Americans, nothing is more probable than that they jealously watched the movements of a vessel that was entering their harbor after dark, necessarily passing near, if not coming directly from the American squadron. Their batteries may even have been provided with hot shot, for any emergency like this. Gunboat No. 8, Lieut. Caldwell, was blown up in the attack of the 7th August, and that very circumstance would probably induce the Turks to make a provision for repeating the injury. A cold shot, however, might very well have caused the explosion. The breaking of one of the shells on deck; the collision with a bolt, a spike, or even a nail in passing through the hull, may have struck fire. It is possible a shot passed through the splinter-room, and exposed the powder of the train, and that in running below with a lantern to ascertain what damage had been done, the accident may have occurred. The moving light seen by the present Commodore Stewart, would favor such a supposition; though it must be remembered, this light may also have been on board some vessel beyond the ketch, or even on the shore.

Only one other supposition has been made concerning this melancholy affair. It has been thought that the ketch grounded on the rocks, in the western entrance, and was blown up there to prevent the enemy from getting possession of her powder. That the Intrepid may have touched the rocks is not improbable, the pass being laid down in the most accurate chart of the harbor, as less than eighty fathoms wide, with shoal water on each side, the visible rocks being more than double that distance asunder; but grounding does not infer the necessity of blowing up the ketch's crew. To suppose that Somers would have destroyed himself through mortification, at finding his vessel on shore, is opposed to reason and probability; while it is doing gross injustice to a character of singular chivalry and generosity, to believe he would have sacrificed his companions to any consideration so strictly selfish.

In this case, as in all others, the simplest and most natural solution of the difficulty is the most probable. All the known facts of the case, too, help to sustain this mode of reasoning. Those who saw the ketch think she was advancing to the last moment, while it is

agreed she had not reached, by several hundred yards, the spot to which it was the intention to carry her. By the chart alluded to, one recently made by an English officer of great merit, it is about eleven hundred yards from the western entrance to the bashaw's castle, and about five hundred and fifty to the inner harbor, or galley mole. Here, close to windward of the enemy's vessels, Somers intended to have left the ketch, and there is no doubt she would have drifted into their midst, when the destruction must have been fearful. God disposed of the result differently, for some wise purpose of his own, rendering the assailants the sole victims of the enterprise. It is only by considering the utter insignificance of all temporal measures, as compared with what lies beyond, that we can learn to submit to these dispensations, with a just sense of our own impotency.

All agree that the Intrepid blew up in or quite near to the western entrance. This was the result of direct observation; it is proved by the fact that portions of the wreck, and some of the shells fell on the rocks, and by the positions in which the Constitution's cutter and the bottom of the ketch were found. With the wind at the eastward, the wreck could not have "grounded on the *north* side of the rocks, near the round battery," as is stated in Commodore Bainbridge's private journal, had the Intrepid been any distance *within* the entrance; nor would the Constitution's boat have drifted past the intervening objects to the westward. The wind had probably a little northing in it, following the line of coast, as is usual with light airs, and, as is shown by the wreck's touching on the *north* side of the rocks, all of which goes to prove, from an examination of the chart, as well as from the evidence of those who were present, that the accident occurred quite near the place stated. Occurring so far out, with nothing to endanger the party, it leaves the moral certainty that the explosion was the result of accident, and not of design; or, if the latter, of an attempt of the enemy to destroy the Intrepid.

Thus perished Richard Somers, the subject of our memoir, and one of the bravest of the brave. Notwithstanding all our means of reasoning, and the greatest efforts of human ingenuity, there will remain a melancholy interest around the manner of his end, which, by the Almighty will, is forever veiled from human eyes in a sad and solemn mystery. In whatever way we view the result, the service on which he went was one of exceeding peril. He is known to have volunteered for it with readiness; to have made his preparations with alacrity; and, when last seen, to have been entering on its

immediate execution with a calm and intrepid serenity. There was an ennobling motive, too, for undertaking so great a risk. In addition to the usual inducements of country and honor, the immediate liberation of Bainbridge and his brave companions was believed to depend on its success. Exaggerated notions of the sufferings of the Philadelphia's crew prevailed in the squadron before Tripoli, as in the country, and their brethren in arms fought with the double incentive of duty and friendship. Ten minutes more would probably have realized the fondest hopes of the adventurers, but the providence of God was opposed to their success, and the cause, if it is ever to be known to man, must abide the revolutions that await the end of time, and the commencement of eternity.

In person, Somers was a man of middle stature—rather below than above it—but stout of frame; exceedingly active and muscular. His nose was inclined to the aquiline, his eyes and hair were dark, and his whole face bore marks of the cross of the French blood that was said to run in his veins. It is a circumstance in the career of this distinguished young officer that no one has anything to urge against him. He was mild, amiable, and affectionate, both in disposition and deportment, though of singularly chivalrous notions of duty and honor. It has been said by a writer, who has had every opportunity of ascertaining the fact, that when a very young man he fought three duels in one day—almost at the same time—being wounded himself in the first two, and fighting the last seated on the ground, sustained by his friend Decatur. Although such an incident could only have occurred with very young men, and perhaps under the exaggerations of a very young service, it was perfectly characteristic of Somers. There was nothing vindictive in these duels. He fired but once at each adversary—he wounded the last man—and was himself, in a physical sense, the principal sufferer. The quarrels arose from his opponents imputing to him a want of spirit for not resenting an idle expression of Decatur's, who was the last man living to intend to hurt Somers's feelings. They loved each other as brothers, and Decatur proved it by offering to fight the last two duels for his friend after the latter received his first wound. But Somers fought for honor, and was determined that the men who doubted him should be convinced of their mistake. Apart from the error of continuing the affairs after the first injury, and the general moral mistake of supposing that a moral injury can be repaired in this mode at all, these duels had the chivalrous character that should ever characterize such meetings, if such meetings are really necessary to human civilization.

Although it is scarcely possible that a warm-hearted young man, like Somers, should not have felt a preference for some person of the other sex, it is not known that he had any serious attachment when he lost his life. Glory appears to have been his mistress for the time being at least, and he left no one of this nature behind him to mourn his early loss. He died possessed of a respectable landed property and one of increasing value; all of which he bequeathed to the only sister mentioned.

Somers was thought to be an expert seaman by those who were good judges of such qualifications. As a commander he was mild, but sufficiently firm. His education, without being unusual even in his profession at that day, had not been neglected, though he would not probably have been classed among the reading men of the service. A chivalrous sense of honor, an unmoved courage, and a perfect devotion to the service in which he was engaged, formed the prominent points of his character, and as all were accompanied by great gentleness of manner and amiability of feeling, he appears to have been equally beloved and respected. The attachment which existed between him and Decatur had something romantic about it. They were rivals in professional daring, while they were bosom friends. As we have already said, it is by no means improbable that the exploits of Decatur, induced Somers, through a generous competition, to engage in the perilous enterprise in which he perished, and on which he entered with a known intention of yielding up his life, if necessary, to prevent the enemy's obtaining the great advantage of demanding ransom for his party, or of seizing the powder in the ketch.

Congress passed a resolution of condolence with the friends of the officers who died in the Intrepid, as well as with those of all the officers who fell before Tripoli. Of these brave men, Somers, on account of his rank, the manner of his death, and his previous exploits, has stood foremost with the country and the service. These claims justly entitle him to the high distinction. Among all the gallant young men that this war first made known to the nation, he has always maintained a high place, and, as it is a station sealed with blood, it has become sacred to the Republic.

It is a proof of the estimation in which this regretted officer is held, that several small vessels have since been called after him. Perry had a schooner, which was thus designated, under his orders on the memorable 10th of September, 1813; and a beautiful little brig has lately been put into the water on the seaboard, which is called the

Somers. In short, his name has passed into a watchword in the American navy; and as they who are first associated with the annals of a nation, whether in connection with its institutions, its arms, its literature, or its arts, form the germ of all its future renown, it is probable that it will be handed down to posterity, as one of the bright examples which the aspiring and daring in their country's service will do well to imitate.]

In Somers we find the elements of greatness. *He had a definite aim;* he hungered and thirsted for naval distinction; it was his chief desire to be an honor to his country. This clearly was his ruling passion, and that "ruling passion" was of sufficient strength to lead him speedily to his own physical destruction. The verity of the poet's expression,

"The paths of glory lead but to the grave,"

found confirmation in him. We need not come to a unity of sentiment upon the principles of resistance or non-resistance—subjects upon which the family of Somers have ever been divided—before we can join issue in awarding him his meed of praise. It is not essential. There is something exemplary in this definiteness of aim, something meritorious, whether we consider the goal praiseworthy or the reverse. Alas! too many youths set out in life without any well-defined aim; they run for no prize; they seek for no desired haven, they rather drift along on the sea of life than sail, leaving all to the winds and tides of fortune and chance. They regard undeveloped contingencies as something beyond their control, forgetting that oftentimes we may calculate and foresee. They may hope for success, but fail to open their eyes and grasp it, they desire fortune and fame, but turn from the paths that lead to their shrines. In Somers we may certainly find much worthy of imitation; much to be held up to the unqualified admiration of American youth, among which we may rank his unwavering patriotism.

Patriotism is one of the noblest principles that can actuate men. Aside from the duties that we owe our Creator, our country claims pre-eminence. In proportion as she furnishes us protection, civil and religious liberty, are we in duty bound as grateful citizens of her soil, as Christians amenable to God for the trust reposed in us, to sustain her laws and uphold her banner. True, patriotism does not consist of a blind devotion to one's country independent of consequences, but he is the true patriot that intelligently devotes his services to his country, and whose aim is to advance her interests and her effectiveness

for the good of coming generations. It is self-evident, therefore, that those who were instrumental in building up and sustaining our Republican form of government were, in the superlative sense, possessors of true patriotism, since such a form of government embodies the greatest amount of philanthropic principles. As a patriot, we find the subject of this memoir, not only zealously sustaining the action of his country in relieving our commerce from the depredations of the Tripolitan pirates, but as an instrument in her hands for its accomplishment, possessed with the ease that affluence affords and the companionship of a large circle of friends at home, he abandons all and enters the service of his country to attain new honors among compatriots.

His valor found a culmination only in the daring deed that terminated his existence. It seems that he regarded courage as one of the loftiest virtues connected with man, without whose accompaniment, no other virtue could maintain its character. This principle actuated him while he lived, and his death was a remarkable consistency. True it is that death has but little terror when a man passes by on a mission of duty.

As a friend, he was true and confiding; as a brother, affectionate and sympathetic; as an associate, beloved and honored. His character unimpeachable; his nature congenial; his manners mild and affable; his death mysterious, and yet glorious. Much of him we can never know; but enough, however, remains to show us a man, in many respects, worthy of imitation. Possessed with an exalted aim, patriotism, bravery, and a self-sacrificing spirit, he passed away in the awful simplicity that exists in the King of Terrors. His dust freely mingles with that of his comrades on the Tripolitan shores. No hand may ever plant the myrtle or twine the cypress there, but here on these American shores, gulf and lake, Atlantic and Pacific, blooms the never-fading amaranth.

The following is a copy of the will of Richard Somers, written in less than a month from the date of his commission as a lieutenant, which was June 2d, 1799.

WILL OF RICHARD SOMERS.

In the name of God, Amen, I, Richard Somers, of Great Egg Harbor, in the County of Gloucester, and State of New Jersey, third lieutenant on board the frigate United States, commanded by Commodore Barry, considering the uncertainty of this transitory life, do

make and publish this my last will and testament as followeth:— First, I do order and direct all my just debts and funeral charges to be paid. *Item*, I do give and devise unto my nephew, Constant Somers, his heirs and assigns forever, all that, my piece of land situate in Egg Harbor aforesaid, adjoining John Steelman's land, on the northeast side to be taken off the land devised to me by my father, Richard Somers, to run from Gregorie's Bay the same course of the ditch and fence, leading up to the main road, and to extend across to Cedar Swamp Creek, containing one hundred acres more or less; also all that, my piece of one hundred acres of land devised to me by my father, purchased of Benjamin Rue in company with Thomas Somers, lying on the road leading from Blackman's meeting-house, up the river; also a piece of one hundred acres in my right in the Tuckahoe meadow, between Tuckahoe River and Middle River, and also the privilege of cutting and taking away fifteen hundred rails, and ten thousand feet of cedar lumber out of my cedar swamp, on Gravely Run. *Item*, I do give and devise unto my niece, Sarah Somers, her heirs and assigns forever, all those my two tracts of land lying in Lycoming County, and State of Pennsylvania, containing between six and seven hundred acres of land more or less, distinguished by my name wrote on the back of the patents. And all the rest of, and residue of my land both in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, and all other my estate, both real and personal, whatsoever and wheresoever, I do give, devise, and bequeath to my sister, Sarah Keen, her heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns forever. And lastly, I do nominate and appoint my brother-in-law, William Jonas Keen, sole executor of this my last will and testament, and hereby revoking all others by me made, I do declare this only to be my last will and testament. In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal, this twenty-ninth day of June in the year of our Lord, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-nine.

RICHARD SOMERS. [L. S.]

Signed, sealed, published, and declared by the above-named Richard Somers, for and as his last Will and Testament, in the presence of us.

Daniel Addis,
Joseph Stear,
Hezekiah his X mark. Lewis.

PHIL'A., *Nov.* 19*th*, 1805.—Then personally appeared Daniel Addis and Hezekiah Lewis, two of the witnesses to the foregoing Will, and on oath did depose and say that they saw and heard Richard Somers, the testator, sign, seal, publish, and declare the same as, and for his last will and testament, and at the giving thereof, he was sound in mind, memory, and understanding, to the best of their knowledge and belief, and that Joseph Stear also subscribed his name as witness to the execution thereof in their presence and in the presence of the said testator.

J. WAMPOLE, *Dep. Reg'r.*

In answer to a letter requesting a description of the Naval Monument erected in Washington by the officers of Com. Preble's command, in memory of those who fell before Tripoli, the Hon. J. T. Nixon kindly favors us with the following. It admits of no abridgement.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
WASHINGTON, June 6th, 1862.

J. B. SOMERS, M.D.

Dear Sir: I duly received your letter, dated May 25, and take great pleasure in complying with your request, to furnish you with all the valuable information, which I have been able to gather, in the midst of my pressing public duties, concerning the Naval Monument, which recently stood at the west front of the National Capitol. This monument was originally erected in 1805, in the navy yard at Washington, by the officers of Com. Preble's command, in the Mediterranean squadron, in honor of those who fell in the naval engagements before Tripoli, in 1804, to wit: Capt. Richard Somers, Lieuts. James Decatur, James R. Caldwell, Henry Wadsworth, Joseph Israel, and midshipman John S. Dorsey. At the burning of Washington by the British in 1814, it was very much defaced and injured. It was afterwards in a great degree restored to its original beauty, and removed to the west front of the Capitol, whence it was transferred, under an act of the first session of last Congress, to the ground of the Naval Academy at Annapolis.

I have gleaned the foregoing facts from Com. Preble's official report, published in the 'American State Papers,' vol. xiv. p. 133, 'Goldsborough's Naval Chronicle,' vol. i. p. 240, and from the 'History of the Naval Academy.' In the last-named work the monument is described as "of white marble, was executed in Italy, and is very elaborate. It is composed of a cubical base, which supports a highly

ornate shaft, upon whose summit stands the American eagle guarding the escutcheon of liberty, and preparing, seemingly, to wing his flight heavenward. The whole structure is about forty feet high. Around the base are four emblematical marble figures, Mercury, Fame, History, and America. One of the panels displays a representation in relief of the city of Tripoli, and upon another are inscribed the names of the officers to whose memory the monument was erected."

Com. Preble, in his official report, alluding to the men who fell, says "they were officers of conspicuous bravery, talents, and merit."

Hoping that this memoranda may aid you in your laudable effort to bring before the public the distinguished services of one of New Jersey's bravest sons,

I am, very respectfully, yours,
JOHN T. NIXON.

A monument, with the following inscription upon it, is erected in the old family burial ground:—

IN MEMORY OF

RICHARD SOMERS,

SON OF RICHARD AND SOPHIA SOMERS,

MASTER COMMANDANT

IN THE NAVY OF THE UNITED STATES.

BORN SEPTEMBER 15TH, 1778.

He perished in the 25th year of his age, in the ketch Intrepid, in the memorable attempt to destroy the Turkish flotilla in the harbor of Tripoli, on the night of the 4th of September, 1804.

DISTINGUISHED FOR HIS ENERGY, COURAGE, AND MANLY SENSE OF HONOR.

"*Pro patria non timidus mori.*"