



The End of Barbary Terror: America's 1815 War against the Pirates of North Africa

Frederick C. Leiner

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When Barbary pirates captured an obscure Yankee sailing brig off the coast of North Africa in 1812, enslaving eleven American sailors, President James Madison first tried to settle the issue through diplomacy. But when these efforts failed, he sent the largest American naval force ever gathered to that time, led by the heroic Commodore Stephen Decatur, to end Barbary terror once and for all.

Drawing upon numerous ship logs, journals, love letters, and government documents, Frederick C. Leiner paints a vivid picture of the world of naval officers and diplomats in the early nineteenth century, as he recreates a remarkable and little known episode from the early American republic. Leiner first describes Madison's initial efforts at diplomacy, sending Mordecai Noah to negotiate, reasoning that the Jewish Noah would fare better with the Islamic leader. But when the ruler refused to ransom the Americans--"not for two millions of dollars"--Madison declared war and sent a fleet to North Africa. Decatur's squadron dealt quick blows to the Barbary navy, dramatically fighting and capturing two ships. Decatur then sailed to Algiers. He refused to go ashore to negotiate--indeed, he refused to negotiate on any essential point. The ruler of Algiers signed the treaty--in Decatur's words, "dictated at the mouths of our cannon"--in twenty-four hours. The United States would never pay tribute to the Barbary world again, and the captive Americans were set free--although in a sad, ironic twist, they never arrived home, their ship being lost at sea in heavy weather. Here then is a real-life naval adventure that will thrill fans of Patrick O'Brian, a story of Islamic terrorism, white slavery, poison gas, diplomatic intrigue, and battles with pirates on the high seas.

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