
GENEALOGICAL SKETCH
OF THE
FIRST THREE GENERATIONS OF PREBLES
IN AMERICA :
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF
ABRAHAM PREBLE THE EMIGRANT,
THEIR COMMON ANCESTOR,
AND OF HIS GRANDSON
BRIGADIER GENERAL JEDEDIAH PREBLE,
AND HIS DESCENDANTS.
BY
GEO. HENRY PREBLE,
Capt. U. S. N.

"The fame that a man whips himself is best
That he may call his own ; honours put on him
Make him no more a man than his clothes do,
Which are as soon taken off ; for in the scorch
The heat comes from the body, not the weeds ;
So man's true fame must strike from his own deeds." MIDDLETON.

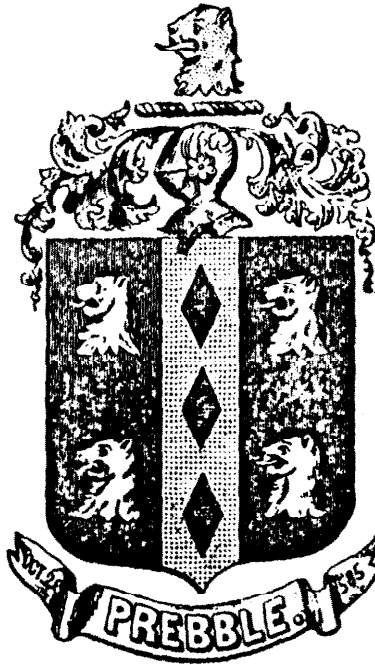
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THE PREBLES IN AMERICA.

ABRAHAM PREBLE, THE COMMON ANCESTOR OF ALL OF THE NAME IN AMERICA.

*"What constitutes the true nobility?
Not wealth, nor name, nor outward pomp, nor power.
Fools have them all; and vicious men may be
The idols and the pagans of an hour.
But 'tis to have a good and honest heart,
Above all meanness and above all crime;
To act the right and honorable part
In every circumstance of place and time.
He who is this, from God his patent takes:
His Maker formed him the true nobleman.
Whoso'er is low or vicious he forakes,
And acts on rectitude's unchanging plan.
Things change around him, changes touch not him —
The star that guides his path fails not our waxes dim."*
PROM. UPRAX.



ABRAHAM PREBLE came over from England with the "Men of Kent,"* and settled, somewhere about the year 1636, in Scituate, Plymouth Colony. Fuller, in his "Worthies of England," says, "Kent hath so carried away the credit in all ages for man hood, that the leading of the front or vanguard in former times hath simply and absolutely belonged to them." Abraham Preble was one of the earliest settlers of Scituate, and very soon after his arrival was married to Judith, the third daughter of Elder Nathaniel Tilden, the descendant of a very ancient family in the County of Kent, England. His ancestry is traced in Berry's County Genealogies to a William Tylden, who paid aid for lands in Kent at the time of making the Black Prince a Knight,

* "Men of Kent." To be so called was considered a distinguishing honor, but the reverse to be called "a Kentish man," for Kentish men were thieves.



GENERAL EDWARD PEEBLE, U.S.A.

Edward Pebley.

COMMODORE EDWARD PREBLE, U. S. N.

THIRD SON BY THE SECOND MARRIAGE. 1761—1807.

AND HIS DESCENDANTS TO 1869.

EDWARD PREBLE,* third son of Brig.-Gen. Jedidiah Preble and Mehit-able Bangs, was born in that part of Falmouth now embraced within the limits of the city of Portland, Maine, Aug. 15, 1761. He was married by the Rev. Samuel Deane, D.D., to Mary, daughter of Nathaniel Deering,† of Portland, March 17, 1801 (who surviving him,

* This brief biography of Commodore Preble is chiefly abridged from "The Life of Edward Preble, by Lorenzo Sabine, pub. in vol. xii. Sparks's Am. Biography, 1846. O.S.R.

† Nathaniel Deering, the father of Mrs. Commo. Preble, was born in Kittery, Me., June 1, 1739, and died at Portland, Sept. 14, 1795, aged 56. The oldest son of fourteen children, his father dying when he was eighteen years of age, it fell upon him to contribute to support the numerous family. At the age of twenty-two, with no capital but his industry and intelligence, he travelled east to better his condition, and after wandering still farther east, settled in Falmouth, probably induced thereto by his mother's recent marriage to Deacon James Milk of that town. At Falmouth he diligently pursued his occupation as a boat builder, at his shop near the foot of Exchange Street. In October, 1764, at the age of twenty-five, he married Dorcas Milk, the second daughter of his step-father, and in 1766 his brother John married another daughter of the deacon.

At the death of Dea. Milk in 1772, he came into possession of a considerable estate, embracing a large portion of the eastern side of Exchange Street, and other parcels of real estate, which still remain in the possession of his descendants. The first store started in Falmouth after its destruction in 1775 by Mowatt was opened by him. It was on a small scale, suited to the depressed circumstances of the town, and was attended principally by his wife, whose shrewdness and good management contributed not a little to augment the inheritance which she had brought her husband. After the war he extended his business, entered into navigation, purchased large and valuable tracts of land, among which was seventy acres extending from Congress Street to Back Cove. He erected buildings, and at his death was engaged in extending the pier or breast-work which had belonged to Deacon Milk, and his own boat-yard, into a spacious wharf, which from its extent took the name of Long Wharf, and was for many years the commercial centre of the port.

His sudden death, in the vigor of life, and in the midst of his large enterprises, was a serious loss to the community.

When first married he lived in a house which stood on the river bank at the corner of Exchange and Fore Streets, which then overlooked the harbor. He afterwards purchased William Owen's house, which stood on the spot since occupied by the Exchange Building, erected in 1839 and burnt in 1855, and the U. S. Custom House and Post-Office, which was razed after the great fire in 1866, being considered unsafe, and on which the new marble Post-Office is now being erected. Here he and his widow who survived him forty years both lived and died. He left but two children: James, born Aug. 23, 1766, who died September, 1855, aged 84; and Mary, b. 1770, who married Com. Preble, and died May 28, 1851, aged 81.

James Deering, son of Nathaniel, and brother of Mrs. Preble, m. Almira, dau. of Enoch Hiley, March 9, 1789, by whom he had Nathaniel, a graduate of Harvard Coll. in 1810, and five daughters. One married the late Thomas A. Deblois, and has no children; another, Henry Merrill, and has no children; and the youngest, who is deceased, married Hon. Wm. Pitt Fessenden, who has recently deceased and left children. Mary and Harriet, unmarried, are still living.

died May 26, 1851, aged 81 years), and died at Portland, Me., Aug. 25, 1897, aged 46 years.

Blessed with an athletic constitution and but little inclined to sedentary amusements, the leisure hours of Edward Preble's youth were mostly devoted to hunting and other active exercises. In the use of the gun he acquired such skill that he once brought down five swallows singly, at successive shots, on a wager. His father designing him for a professional life, sent him to Dummer Academy to be fitted for College. Close application to study was not suited to his temperament, and the college project was abandoned, but he laid there the foundation for an education which enabled him to profit by his opportunities for the acquisition of knowledge after

The Mother of Nathaniel Deering, whose maiden name was Annie Dunn, died in 1769, at the age of 55, and his widow died March, 1835, at the age of 86.—Willis's *Hist. of Portland*, 1st and 2d Edition; and *Deane and Smith's Journals*.

George Deering, Deering or Dearing, was an inhabitant of Scarborough, Me., 1645. Roger, of Scarborough, probably a son of George, died 1676. He had a son Roger at Kittery, who returned an inventory June 26, 1676; amount, £136 7 3. He was probably the ancestor of Nathaniel. There was also a Boston family of Deerings descended from Henry, b. Aug. 16, 1639.—*Maine Hist. Col.*, vol. i.; Savage's *Gen. Register*, vol. ii.

Humphrey Deering was one of the sixteen soldiers comprising the garrison of Fort Mifflin, 1699.—*N. E. Hist. and Gen. Reg.*, vol. xii. pp. 258.

Anderson, in his *Genealogy of Surnames* (1865), says many names have originated by adding "ing" to the father's name; "as Deering, a little dear; or Dear, a man's name; also Darling, little dear."

Lower says: The source of the ancient family of Dering, or Deering (whence the affix of Surrenden-Dering, Co. Kent) "appears to be that of De Morinis, who probably originated in the territory of the Morine, in the N. E. of France. One of the early members, Deringus de M., seems to have stamped his baptismal appellation upon his descendants as a surname in the 12th century. (See Halstead's Kent.) But it is to be remarked that there was in that county, prior to Doomsday, a tenant who bore the name of *Derine filius Sired*."—*Patronymica Britannica*, a Dict. of the Family Names of the United Kingdom, endeavored by Mark Antony Lower.

The name of Dering, according to Debrett, is a very old Saxon one, and the first part of the family motto, "*Terrere nolo, Timere nescio*," has reference to the ancestral name *Diering*, which signifies terror. A Diering appears to have witnessed a deed of gift to the Church in Rochester as far back as A.D. 880.

Burke also says the name *Dering* is derived from the Saxon word signifying terror. The first Sir Edward Dering in England was created a Baronet, Feb. 1, 1625.

The arms of three or four families of Dering are given in Burke's *Enc. of Heraldry*, and also in Berry's *Enc. of Heraldry*.

Sir Edward Dering, Bart., was a celebrated Puritan. "The discourses of this excellent and celebrated man were published separately in 8vo., but were sometimes sold as a collection with a half title expressing *The Works of Maister Dering*." (*Notes and Queries*, 3d Series, vols. 1 and 2.) He was of the Surrenden family. Vol. x., 3d Series, No. 2, contains some lines on his death. He died June 26, 1576. In 1611-12, Sir Edward Dering was expelled the House of Commons for the preface to the speeches against the Grand Remonstrance. He preached a sermon before the Queen's Majesty, 25 Feb. 1569, which was printed in London, 1578. There are several extracts from household books of Sir Edward D., father and son, from 1619 to 1652, published in vol. i. 1st Series, *Notes and Queries*.

school books were abandoned, so that he attained the power of communicating his thoughts and opinions in a style correct, clear, comprehensive and forcible. While at school his native town was burnt by Mowatt. On leaving school and put to work on the farm at Capisic, to which his father had removed after the burning of Falmouth, he suddenly threw down his hoe, declaring he would do no more such work, and trudging afoot to Falmouth, entered at the age of sixteen on board of a privateer belonging to Newburyport, commanded by Capt. William Friend. He had previously wished to go to sea, but his father had opposed his wish, and now hoped one voyage would cure him of his propensity. The privateer went to Europe, and on the return passage he had a severe experience of the hardships of a sailor's life, but he was conspicuous for good conduct, and continued resolutely bent on becoming a seaman. In 1779 his father procured for him a midshipman's warrant in the Massachusetts State Marine, and he was appointed to the Massachusetts Ship Protector, 26 guns, commanded by Capt. John Foster Williams, and thus commenced his career as an officer when seventeen and a half years old. The Protector soon sailed, and June, 1779, engaged off Newfoundland the British Letter of Marque, "Admiral Duff," of 36 guns. The action was short, close and hard fought, and was terminated in about an hour by the Duff's taking fire and blowing up.* Many of her crew jumped overboard, fifty of whom were saved by the boats of the Protector. The loss of the latter in killed and wounded was small, but a malignant fever soon after carried off a considerable part of her crew. Subsequent to this action the Protector maintained a running fight for some time with the Thames, a 32 gun frigate of superior force, and escaping into port landed her prisoners and was refitted. On another cruise she was captured,† with Preble still on board, and some of her officers were sent to England, but Preble was put on board the famous prison-ship Jersey, at New York.‡ Here he fell sick, passed through a very dangerous fever, was placed upon parole, and finally obtained his release through the kindness of a royalist, Col. William

* For a particular account of this action, see sketch of John Foster Williams, in vol. ii. p. 98, N. E. Hist. and Gen. Register, 1848. See also "The Revolutionary Adventures of Ebenezer Fox, of Roxbury, Ms. Boston, 1833."

† The N. E. Hist. and Gen. Reg. says the Protector left Boston about the last of October, 1780, and after cruising before Halifax and about the Grand Banks, bore away for the West Indies, captured several rich prizes, and on her return was obliged to surrender to two ships of superior force. In 1848, Mr. Frederic Lane was said to possess the original log-book of the Protector.

‡ For full account of the Jersey, and the sufferings of the prisoners confined in her, see "Adventures of Christopher Hawkins, by Chas. J. Bushnell—privately printed, 1864." Also, "Narrative of John Blatchford," by the same author—privately printed. N. York, 1865.

Tyng, a former friend and associate in arms of his father, and so was restored to his friends after about a year's absence.*

Preble next joined the "Winthrop," another Massachusetts State ship, and commanded by Capt. George Little, who had been the first lieutenant and executive officer of the "Protector," and was subsequently a Captain in the Navy of the United States. Though less than twenty years of age, Preble was first Lieutenant and executive officer of the Winthrop.

The vessel rendered great service in protecting our trade and making prizes of privateers under the royal flag. While cruising in the waters of Maine, Capt. Little ascertained that an armed brig lay at anchor near Castine, under cover of the guns of the British post there; and a design was formed to run the Winthrop along side in the night and carry her by surprise. Preble was to lead the boarders, consisting of forty picked men, dressed in white frocks, that friend might be distinguished from foe. The bold measure was successfully executed. The Winthrop run alongside. Preble, with *fourteen* of his force, gained the deck of the brig, but the Winthrop's way was so rapid, and she passed the brig so quickly that the remaining twenty-six were unable to leap on board, and he was left with his small force to contend with the foe as he best could. Little hailed him and asked if he would have more men. "No," was Preble's cool reply, "we have more than we want; we stand in each others' way." Deceived by this declaration, the crew of the brig were panic-stricken, and some of them leaped overboard, while the officers were instantly sought in the cabin by Preble in person, and called to surrender, as resistance was useless, and would cause the loss of their lives. The prize having been secured, was worked out to sea under a severe fire from the shore batteries, and was safely taken to Boston.

At the peace Massachusetts no longer required a navy, and its officers were generally discharged—a few small vessels and officers only being retained to protect the revenue. Dr. Deane, in his Diary, remarks, under date Dec. 1, 1782, "Edward Preble got home."

After leaving the Winthrop, Preble sought employment in the merchant service, and for about fifteen years devoted himself principally to commercial pursuits. The names of several schooners, brigs and ships, which he commanded, in which he went abroad as supercargo, or in which he had an interest as owner or shipper, are preserved in the few business letters and accounts that now remain. It is certain

* Col. William Tyng was a son of Commo. Edward Tyng, and sacrificed to his loyalty a landed estate in Boston which a hundred millions of dollars could not purchase now. He returned after the war, and died at Gorham, Me.—Cleveland's *Centennial Dummer Academy Discourse*, 1863.

he visited several parts of the world, and at times resided in foreign countries as an agent of the American house with which he was connected, and at other times was engaged in trading voyages along our coast, and to the British Colonies. He resided for a time in Spain. Again we trace him in the West Indies, and we glean from his correspondence that he made a voyage to Africa, and that the speculation was unfortunate principally, if not entirely, because of his conscientious objection to invest his outward cargo in slaves. Upon his last foreign enterprise he was captured by a French pirate, plundered of his property, and detained for several months. While his personal expenditures were small, his activity ceaseless, and his industry was highly praiseworthy and even remarkable, his fortune in 1798 was scarcely better than it was fifteen years earlier, at the commencement of his mercantile career in 1783. The open-handed liberality, for which he was distinguished through life, was sufficient to abstract no inconsiderable share of his gains and earnings, and he was remembered between the ages of twenty-two and thirty-seven as a fine-looking, frank and generous seaman, of a decided tone and hasty temper.

The troubles in France brought Preble into public life a second time, and he was commissioned a Lieutenant in the U. S. Navy, Jan. 17, 1799, to take rank from April 9, 1798. On the 12th of April, 1798, James McHenry, Secretary of War, communicated to him his appointment as a first Lieutenant in the Navy of the United States, to serve on board the Frigate Constitution, Samuel Nicholson, Captain. He joined the Constitution, but he did not serve in her, having had some disagreement with the Captain, and after a short leave to attend to his private affairs, obtained command of the brig Pickering. His order to that vessel is dated January, 1799, and was his first active duty after entering the national marine. The Pickering, and several vessels of her class, had been employed on the revenue service, there being no vessels at that time belonging to the Treasury Department. She was a brig of 187 tons, mounted 14 guns, and carried 70 men.

The circumstances of the country required all its armed vessels for cruising, and when ordered to the Pickering he was advised that she would probably be transferred from the treasury to the naval establishment; and on the 17th of January he was ordered to proceed without delay to the Island of Dominica, W. I., and cruise in the vicinity of Prince Rupert's Bay until joined by Commodore Barry in the Frigate United States, when he was to place himself under that officer's direction. Few incidents of his life while attached to Barry's squadron in the West Indies are known. He may have remained a

year, and have made two cruises in the Pickering before his promotion.*

He was commissioned a Captain June 7, 1799, to take rank from the 15th of the preceding month. He was not quite thirty-six years old at the time of his promotion, and may not have been strictly entitled to the place given him on the Captain's list; and it is quite probable it was given as an inducement to continue in the service, from which he had thoughts of retiring. The Secretary, in communicating his commission, hoped that he would accept it and remain in the navy; "for," said he, "you may justly expect to rank high, and soon get a good ship." Soon after he received orders to the "Essex." This frigate was built at Salem by subscription from the merchants, who received Government stock for the money advanced, and Com. Preble took charge of her before her rigging was completed.

The Essex sailed in company with the Frigate Congress, Captain Sever, on a cruise to the East Indies in January, 1800. The ships were separated in a gale. The Congress was dismasted and put back, but Preble in the Essex pursued his way and arrived safely at the Cape of Good Hope, where he awaited for some time the arrival of his consort. The Congress not appearing, he proceeded to the accomplishment of the object of his voyage, which was to convoy home a fleet of American Indiamen. Fourteen vessels, engaged in the China and other eastern trade, with cargoes valued at several millions of dollars, were accordingly protected and conducted to points of safety. He continued in the India seas several months while collecting his convoy, and returned to the United States near the close of 1800. It was his good fortune in the Essex to carry the American flag around the Cape of Good Hope for the first time in a public vessel, and twelve years later the Essex, under the command of Commo. Porter, had the additional honor of being the first American vessel to carry "our flag" around Cape Horn.

On the reduction of the navy in 1801, he was one of the nine Captains retained for the reduced establishment, and was ordered to the Essex without delay, to prepare her for a cruise of twelve months, in the squadron under Com. Truxton, at Hampton Roads. Though the law authorized but nine Captains, twelve were retained, and Preble was the ninth of these; before the reduction, he was the twenty-first on the list.

* Lieut. B. Hillar succeeded him in command of the Pickering. In August, 1800, she sailed for the West Indies, and he and all on board perished in her at sea. The Pickering was built at Newburyport by Orlando B. Merrill, who in 1794, four years previous to her launch, invented the *water line* model for ships, still in use. Previous to that time there were only skeleton models, composed of pieces showing the ribs, &c. of the ship. Mr. Merrill's original model was deposited with the New York Hist. Soc. in 1853.

While in the East Indies he was dangerously sick of a fever, and returned in a precarious state of health. From the effects of this sickness he never recovered: but in accordance with his instructions he fitted the *Essex* for sea, and proceeded to Norfolk, Va., where he was compelled to relinquish the command and seek the rest which nature required.* While thus a gentleman of leisure, he married Miss Mary Deering, the only daughter of Nathaniel Deering, who long survived him.

On the 12th of January, 1802, he was appointed to the Frigate *Adams*, 23, then fitting for the Mediterranean, and feeling too feeble for the duty, again tendered his resignation. Hon. Robert Smith, of Maryland, Secretary of the Navy, declined however to receive the commission "of a gentleman possessing such high qualifications to advance and maintain our naval character," offered him under circumstances which "irresistibly excited sensations of sympathy and regret; but," he continued, "to insist on your retaining command of the *Adams* would be an act of inhumanity which no state necessity scarcely could justify. You will therefore consider yourself hereby released from the command of the *Adams*, and on furlough till your health shall be restored; and I pray you to accept of my sincere wishes for its speedy restoration."

Rest, freedom from care, and more than all, a home, so far alleviated his complaint and restored his strength, that in the spring of the following year he considered himself able to resume active duty. Yet he was not well. From his return in the *Essex* to his latest hour, he was a stranger to the enjoyment of sound health.

On the 14th of May, 1803, he was directed to take charge of the Frigate *Constitution* at Boston, as yet unknown to fame; and fit her for sea with all despatch. A week later he was advised of the views of government, and informed that the President had determined to entrust to his command a squadron destined to act against the States of Barbary. Owing to the miserably defective naval organization of the period, he was unable to get the *Constitution* ready before August, and dropping down to President Roads August 13th, went to sea the next day, and anchored at Gibraltar Sept. 12th.†

The short, brilliant and successful cruises which followed, and his attack upon Tripoli, are so well known that they need not be repeated in this sketch.

In May, 1804, while in the full tide of success, he was relieved from his command of the squadron because it was thought necessary to

* Capt. William Bainbridge succeeded him in the command of the *Essex*.

† A MSS. copy of the Log-Book of the *Constitution* during this famous cruise, kept by Sailing-Master Haraden, is deposited in the Library of the Naval Library and Institute, at the Charlestown Navy Yard.

increase the force of it, and as there were no captains junior to him who could be employed on that service, his retention would necessarily involve his being placed over Captains who were his seniors. That his being relieved was through no dissatisfaction with what he had done is evident from the following letters. On the 7th of May, fourteen days before the order appointing his successor, the Secretary wrote him : " It is with great pleasure that I repeat to you the assurance that your whole conduct has received the unqualified approbation of the President of the United States, and that his confidence in your zeal and judgment remains unabated." The order appointing his successor contains the following passages : " Your good sense will perceive we have been unavoidably constrained to supersede you in the command in which you have acquitted yourself in a manner honorable to yourself, useful to your country, and in all respects satisfactory to us. Be assured, Sir, that no want of confidence in you has been mingled with the considerations which have imposed the necessity of this measure. You have fulfilled our highest expectations ; and the President has given it in an especial charge to me to declare that he has the highest confidence in your activity, judgment and valor. Through me he desires to convey to you his thanks for the very important services you have rendered to your country, and I beg you to be assured, Sir, that it affords me great personal satisfaction to be the medium of conveying to you his sentiments in relation to your conduct."

It should be recollected that in politics he differed from the administration, and that his five attacks upon Tripoli were unknown, and had not indeed been made at the date of these communications from the department. Many and similar tributes are to be met with in previous as well as in subsequent letters from the Secretary.

Equally direct and marked was the commendation he received from various gentlemen who were present at the scene of his arduous duties. " To tell you," wrote Col. Lear, " what I think of your conduct would appear like flattery." Said Mr. Davis, our Consul at Tunis : " You have laid the foundation for a national character. Your example will stimulate all the secondary nations, and I trust finally destroy the false policy of Europe." Mr. Higgins, our Navy Agent at Malta, to whom he enclosed a copy of the Secretary's despatch announcing that he was to be superseded, wrote : " I will be bold to say, that the thanks of the President and the warm approbation of your country are not more than a well earned tribute to the efforts you have made to serve it."

On his retiring from his command, his officers with entire unanimity presented him with an address expressive of the kindest sentiments.

A paper of this description from inferiors to an official superior is seldom proper: but in this case, if we regard the peculiar circumstances under which this superior and his inferiors met and parted, the motive alone may be considered, and not only excuse the act itself, but render it one of the most certain proofs of the Commodore's personal and professional merits. This address bears the signatures of no less than fifty-three officers. And among these signers who afterwards gained naval crowns of their own, was the veteran Stewart, who died Nov. 7, 1869, aged 91; Hull, Decatur, Lawrence, McDonough, Burrows, Chauncey and Morris, with many others whose names are dear to the nation. Jones, Bainbridge and Biddle were at the time immured in the Bashaw's prison. Thus it happened that a large proportion of the successful commanders of the war of 1812 acted under him before Tripoli. To have had any share in training these officers is of itself an honor, and has been the occasion of giving to him the honorary distinction of being the father of the American Navy.

Nor was the expression of opinion on this occasion confined to officers of our own government. To Preble the appointment of a successor was unexpected, and his feelings were evidently wounded.

He had many friends among the civilians and the military and naval characters whom he had met. His relations with Sir Alexander Ball, the Governor of Malta, and Capt. Schonberg, R. N., were intimate. To the former, one of Nelson's Captains, who commanded the *Alexander* at the Battle of the Nile, and whom Nelson said on that occasion was one of his "supporters," Preble inclosed a copy of the Secretary's letter, the last from which we have quoted, and wrote to Capt. Schonberg apprising him of the fact. In his letter of reply Sir Alexander said, "I have communicated this to all I know. They join with me in regretting that an officer whose talents and professional abilities have been justly appreciated, and whose manners and conduct eminently fit him for so high a command, should be removed from it."

We may now appropriately close with the high compliment of his Holiness the Pope: "The American commander, and in a short space of time, has done more for the cause of Christianity, than the most powerful nations of Christendom have done for ages."

After transferring the squadron to his successor Barron, much remained to be done; and about four months elapsed before the Commodore took his departure for the United States. While closing his accounts with Consuls and Navy Agents, and while disposing of other official business, he visited Malta twice, Messina twice, and was also at Palermo, Naples, Gibraltar and Tangiers. Having resigned the Constitution to Decatur; having endeavored to arrange with the

Neapolitan government on behalf of Barron for bomb-vessels and mortars, gun-boats, cannon-shot and shells, to be used the next season; having written farewell letters to Bainbridge, Col. Lear, Sir Alexander Ball, and several other friends, he sailed for home in the *John Adams* in January, 1805. This ship had on board all the invalid officers and men of the squadron, and her destination was Washington; but on the 22d of February it was reported the quantity of water was becoming short, and he advised Chauncey, who was in command, to make for the nearest safe port in the United States. Four days after (26th) she arrived at New York. Preble repaired to the seat of government with but little delay, reaching Washington on the 4th of March, 1805.

A few days previous to his arrival the President had communicated to both Houses of Congress an account of his proceedings between the 9th of July and the 10th of September, 1804, which embraced the period of his most important operations; and in the accompanying message remarked that "the energy and judgment displayed by his excellent officer, through the whole course of the service lately confided to him, and the zeal and bravery of his officers and men in the several enterprises executed by them, cannot fail to give high satisfaction to Congress and their country, of whom they have deserved so well."

On the 3d of March, the day before Preble reached Washington, a resolution passed Congress directing that a gold medal, emblematical of the attacks on the town, batteries and naval force of Tripoli, should be presented to him; that a sword should be presented to each of the commissioned officers and midshipmen who had "distinguished themselves in these several attacks; and that one month's extra pay should be given to each of the petty officers, seamen and marines of the squadron." The medal was transmitted to the Commodore on the 17th of May, 1806.*

It was rumored in 1805 that Preble was offered the post of Secretary of the Navy; but whether such an offer was made or not cannot now be ascertained, but it was believed by many of his friends, and he received many congratulatory letters, among others, one from his friend Sir Alexander Ball, in which he says: "It is reported that the President wished to give you the strongest proof of his sense of your merit by appointing you Secretary of the Navy, which I should have rejoiced at your accepting, knowing how eminently you are fitted to fill that high office."

A mission to Europe, for the purpose of acquiring information that

* Am. State Papers, Vol. xiv. pp. 282-298, *et seq.*

might be useful to the Navy, was proposed to him in April, 1805, while later in the year he was assured that upon a given contingency he should have a Navy Agency, or what the Secretary thought would be preferable to him, the command of the Navy Yard at Washington. He was also much consulted by the Department upon various matters relating to the service.

In 1806, the number of officers and seamen of the navy was limited by law. The Captains were fourteen, and Preble was the fifth in rank — Nicholson, Murray, Samuel Barron and Rodgers being his seniors.

The course of events impelled him to remain in the navy, though the birth of a son, his only child, Edward, in February, 1806, added to his previously existing inducements to return to private life. Towards the close of 1806, the Commodore apparently panted once more for active duty. He wrote to the Secretary, "If a service of danger presents, I shall feel mortified at not being employed. I stand ready to proceed at a moment's warning on any service which the government may think proper to send me, against any nation or people, and to shed my blood in the execution of such service." But little of life remained to him.

On its becoming known at Washington that his health was failing, much sympathy was felt by those with whom he had official intercourse; and early in 1807 he was strongly urged to remove to that city, both for the benefit of his health and that the government might have the advantage of his presence. A friend, high in the confidence of the administration, in April of that year addressed him a long letter on the subject. After speaking of the "soul-reviving breezes" of the metropolis, and of the many beautiful situations which could be purchased there on good terms, he writes: "You are a man of enlarged views and powerful intellect, and for being such I want you here. Your life is valuable to the country, therefore I want you here. I believe this climate would keep your clay in wholesome animation longer than that of which you justly complain. I love such men as you, and therefore I want you here. Between us, you would be chief counsellor." Several reasons, none of which need be stated, prevented him from leaving New England.

He was offered, not long after, the Navy Agency at Boston; and it was suggested to him that he would be allowed to retain his rank and full pay as a Captain in the Navy. This appointment, increasing debility compelled him to decline. On the 13th of June the Secretary desired him to proceed to New York to witness and give his opinion of the sub-marine experiments of Fulton; and this, it is believed, was the last official employment he was asked to undertake. Before the

time designated for making the proposed test of Mr. Fulton's plan for attacking and blowing up ships of war arrived, the Commodore's case was hopeless. He had been for some time superintending the construction of several gun-boats at Portland; and in the hope that short trips in the bay would be serviceable to his failing frame, he requested of the Department the liberty to use one, which had been completed. The request was granted most readily and in the handsomest manner. He continued in charge of the gun-boats until the arrival of Lieut. Lawrence,* who was sent to relieve him, and until he was confined to his bed. In this situation he even maintained a correspondence with the Secretary of the Navy, and gave directions for the final equipment of the boats. Meantime his medical adviser and friends united in recommending his trial of a sea-voyage to Madeira. This, in the opinion of all, was the only course that promised to prolong his life; and he accordingly applied for liberty to embark. The difficulties which finally produced war were already serious; and with a heart still as stout and as patriotic as at any former time, he said in his letter of application, "I should not, in the present state of our foreign relations, ask permission to leave the continent, were I not in hope that a few weeks' absence will enable me to attend to any duty which may be required of me."

A most unexpected event occurred to change his purpose—the affair of the Chesapeake and Leopard, too painfully familiar to every American to need narrating. When the news of it reached Portland, the Commodore was absent on a short excursion in a gun-boat. On coming in he anchored in the town harbor, and according to arrangement, a valued friend, seeing the customary signal, went down to him. On communicating the tidings, this friend related that the Commodore appeared entirely confounded. He made one exclamation indicative of intense astonishment, and falling back upon his bed, did not so much as even speak another word during the remainder of the interview. "I had no idea," said the gentleman, "that anything could have so moved him." On the 10th of July he spoke painfully of the occurrence, though without mentioning the unfortunate commander (whom the calm judgment of the well-informed of the present generation will hardly fail to view more as a victim than a delinquent), and earnestly entreated in the event of war to be called into service. "I am very low," said he to the Secretary, "but I will obey, if I am obliged to be carried on board; the occasion will soon restore me."

Twenty-four hours before his death, and probably in his last communication, he stated that he should defer his plan of going to

* James Lawrence, afterwards killed in command of the Chesapeake.

Madeira until he should know what was the result of this affair, and that under the prevalent impression of a rupture, his intention was to make excursions along the Atlantic coast in a vessel, which he had chartered for the purpose, and to return to port after short absences, to learn what had in the mean time transpired. He was brought in from sea, and carried home to die. He suffered much. His disease, which was originally a debility of the digestive organs, assumed the character of a fixed and rapid consumption; and on Tuesday, the 25th of August, 1807, his life terminated at Portland. Ten days before, he had completed his forty-sixth year. The brother next him in years, who was also a seaman, was the closest in feeling of all his blood relations, and attended him much in his last illness. To this brother the Commodore's last words were addressed. They were: "Give me your hand, Enoch — I'm going — give me your hand."

His funeral was an imposing pageant, uniting, with the solemnities of religion, masonic and military pomp and show. Business and labor were entirely suspended, and the population of Portland and its neighborhood, moved by a common impulse, and forming a large assemblage, devoted Thursday, the 27th of August, to the sad duty of his burial. It was known at Boston that the funeral services would then occur, and the usual mourning honors were paid by the shipping in that port. Intelligence of his death reached Washington on the first of September, a few minutes past noon; and, says the *National Intelligencer* of the second, "Immediately the flags of the frigates in ordinary, and at the marine garrison, were struck half mast; at half past noon one gun was fired at the Navy Yard, which was repeated every five minutes till seventeen minutes before sunset, at which commenced a discharge of seventeen minute guns, when with the departing sun, the colors were struck amidst the sincere regrets of his brother officers." The event was suitably noticed in other places, while the newspaper press, and the private letters of distinguished citizens, bewailed the loss of so much professional talent, ardent patriotism and civic worth, at so critical a juncture. The master spirit of our Navy at that period had indeed fallen!

At the time of his decease, Commo. Preble had nearly completed a large and elegant mansion-house at Portland, where, in possession of sufficient wealth, and the society of his family and friends, he hoped for happiness and repose. He did not live to occupy that house, although it remained the residence of his widow until her death. Since that event, becoming surrounded by places of trade and traffic, it has been enlarged and converted into an hotel, known as the "*Preble House*." The Commodore died in a large wooden house then known as the *Preble Mansion*, but afterwards as the *Sun Tavern* and *Casco*

House, which, after many alterations, was destroyed in the great fire of 1866. The Casco Bank now covers its site.

"In many things," says Mr. Sabine, "Commo. Preble was a remarkable man. He died before his powers were fully tried or matured. Though he did but little to attract the popular eye, he is still regarded as the most considerable naval character of his time in America. Commo. Preble possessed a fruitful, vigorous, and comprehensive mind; and that he was equal to accomplishing the most important enterprises, there seems no room to doubt. He reached in a moment the result which in ordinary men requires long and calm reflection; and he carried through the plans which he conceived with a promptness and self-confidence that inspired and insured success. He acted upon the principle that *'the boldest measures are the safest,'* and yet circumspection and prudence were distinguishing traits. His perseverance was not lessened but rather increased by the neglect of his government and the obstinacy of his foe. Pain and sickness did not overcome his energy, and his activity continued until nature was fairly exhausted. Qualities like these, and his devotedness to duty; the disinterestedness which impelled him to accept of a perilous command when disease was preying upon his frame, and when the prolongation of his life imperatively demanded of him to seek repose in a home of tranquillity and ease, and recovery in the attentions of devoted friends; his sincerity and benevolence; his disregard of money except as a means of doing good, and his many benefactions to officers and others less favored by fortune than himself, entitle him to the remembrance and gratitude of his countrymen. During the last years of his life, and especially after his return from the Mediterranean, his opinions were solicited on the most important and delicate subjects, and in a manner which shows that his advice was to be regarded as decisive. Of naval men generally, and upon naval affairs, he appears to have been the common adviser; and private wrongs and griefs, and public embarrassments and perplexities, were alike submitted to his honor and discretion. The true character of this faithful and unwearied servant is imperfectly known to the present generation; but it was well understood by those who directed our public affairs at the opening of the century, that to elevate his favorite arm of the national defence, to render it respectable in the eyes of the American people and of the world, he was ready and to a considerable extent did sacrifice ease, leisure, the endearments of domestic and social life, health and estate. When certain professional objects should have been accomplished, he promised himself retirement; but it pleased the Disposer of all events, that the future in which he had garnered up so much as a husband, father and friend, should never come."

Another of his biographers, James Fenimore Cooper, in summing up his character, says of him : " His career in the present navy was so short, and the greater portion of it kept him so much aloof from the body of his brother officers, that we must look to some unusual cause for the great influence he obtained while living, and the lasting renown he has left attached to his name, now he is dead. If the few days passed in visits, during which nothing ostensible was done, be excepted, Preble was only forty-two days before Tripoli altogether. In that time he captured nothing, excluding the three gun-boats taken in the first attack ; nor did he meet with any of that brilliant success which carries away men's imaginations, making the result the sole test of merit, without regard to the means by which it was obtained. Still it may be questioned if any other name in American naval annals has as high a place in the estimation of the better class of judges, as that of Preble. Decatur performed many more brilliant personal exploits : the victory of McDonough, besides standing first on the score of odds and magnitude, possesses the advantage of bringing in its train far more important immediate consequences than any other naval achievement of the country ; yet it may be doubted if the intelligent do not give to Preble a place in the scale of renown still higher than that occupied by either of these heroes. Hull broke the charm of a long established and imposing invincibility ; yet no man competent to judge of merit of this nature, would think of comparing Hull to Preble, though the latter virtually never took a ship. The names of neither Lawrence, Bainbridge, nor Perry, will ever be placed by the discriminating at the side of that of Preble, though ten-fold more has been written to exalt the renown of either than has been written in behalf of Preble. They themselves would have deferred to the superiority of the old Mediterranean commander, and neither would probably dream of placing his own name on a level with that of Preble. Chauncey, out of all question, occupied the most arduous and responsible station ever filled by an American naval commander, and Preble never performed more gallant personal deeds than Chauncey, or showed higher resolution in the face of his enemy ; yet Chauncey always spoke of Preble as men name their admitted superiors ! Paul Jones alone can claim to be placed on the same elevation as to resources and combinations ; but few who are familiar with the details of the events connected with both, would think of placing even Paul Jones fairly at Preble's side. There was a compactness, a power of combination, an integrity of command, and a distinctness of operations about Preble's memorable month that Jones's justly renowned cruise did not exhibit. It will be vain to contend that Jones's materials were bad, and that his inferiors could scarcely be called his sub-

ordinates. There may have been much truth in this, but Jones's cruise showed high resolution, and far reaching views, rather than ability to control, combine, and influence, the qualities that Preble so eminently possessed. Landais would never have deserted Preble twice; he would have had him out of the ship, and Dale in his place, for the first offence.

"There can be little doubt that some portion of Preble's reputation is owing to the place he filled in the order of time, as connected with the formation of the present Marine. This of itself, however, would not have built up a permanent name; and the subsequent exploits of McDonough, Decatur, Lawrence, Biddle, Blakely, &c., would have been certain to throw it in the shade. * * *

"Under the most disadvantageous circumstances, and with cruelly insufficient means, he lowered the pretensions of his enemy one-half in ten days, and had brought them down to nothing by the end of the month! We say cruelly insufficient means, for in effect the *Constitution* alone, with her thirty guns in broadside, had frequently to contend with a hundred guns in batteries.

"But no better circumstance can be cited in favor of Preble's professional character and conduct, than the hold he obtained on the minds of his officers. Personally, they had much to induce them to dislike him; yet we cannot recall an instance in which we have ever heard one of them find fault with the least of his movements. All seemed to think that everything that was done, was done for the best. We hear no complaints of injudicious or unreasonable operations; and, what is still more unusual in combined movements, of commanders who did not do their whole duty. Inequality of conduct and of services is one of the commonest occurrences in all extended operations by sea or land. We hear tales and anecdotes of this sort as connected with McDonough's and Perry's victories, as connected with Chauncy's various manœuvres and battles, but none in relation to Preble and his command. Every man in his squadron knew and felt that he was governed.

"One cannot but regret that Preble did not survive, with all his powers, until after the occurrence of the war of 1812. Nothing was more apparent than the want of combination and intelligent wielding of force on the Atlantic, that was exhibited throughout the whole of those important years; and we cannot but think, had Preble's capacity and energy been brought to bear on the service, he would have shown something more brilliant than isolated combats, as the result of even the small means that could have been placed at his control. He would then have been second in rank in the Navy, as to all practical purposes, and must have been intrusted with one of the largest squadrons

"Preble's influence on the discipline of the service was of a valuable and lasting nature. Until his time, the men of the present Navy were little accustomed to act in concert, and some of the previous attempts had not been attended with very flattering results. Officers would obey at every hazard, it is true, as Stewart did when he went to sea in the Experiment towing out his main-mast after him, in consequence of a petulant order from Truxton; but they had not been taught to repress their own ardor, or to yield their own opinions to those of their superiors, in the face of an enemy, in order to present a combined and available front, until Preble gave them the severe, but salutary lesson.

"It is probable that the marine of this country, long ere the close of this century, will become one of the most powerful the world has yet seen. * * * In that day all the earlier facts of the national career will be collected with care, and preserved with veneration. Among the brightest of those who will be exhibited connected with the deeds of that infant navy, out of which will have grown the colossal power that must then wield the trident of the seas, will stand prominent the forty days of the Tripolitan war, crowded with events that are inseparable from the name and renown of Edward Preble."

Mr. Sabine, in closing his brief account of his life—after speaking of his reputed ungovernable temper—says: "It should be recorded, that whatever might be the violence of his resentment for the instant, he possessed a rare faculty of making and retaining friends; that no bitter feuds occurred among his officers; and that during his command in the Mediterranean, there was neither a court martial or a duel.* Men who knew him and one another as strangers, parted as near kinsmen."

* Cooper, in his *Naval History of the U. S.*, says:—"Perhaps no service, either in the way of ships or officers, ever had so large a proportion of what was excellent in it, and so small a proportion of that which was defective, as the Navy of the U. S., the day peace was signed with Tripoli (June 3, 1805). A stern discipline, a high moral tone, rare models in seamanship, active warfare, means of comparison, and a spirit of emulation that is certain to carry the national character to the highest level, wherever the national energies can be permitted to exhibit themselves, had conspired to produce this end. The petulant and always questionable profits of private rencontres, which are so apt to sully the renown of infant services, had disappeared in a chivalry that seemed to have forgotten all but the country and her honor. Not a duel was fought during the command of Preble; the brave men who stood assembled under his orders, regarded each other as brothers, and the honor of one appeared to be connected with the honor of all. An admirable *esprit du corps* was created, and the button which bore the emblem of the common profession, was deemed a signal of the presence of a friend. Men stood by each other in moments of severe trial, and even the body of the nation, which is so little addicted to the sentimental, or the abstract, began to regard the flag with open pride. In a word, the tone, discipline, pride, emulation, and spirit, that the Navy derived from this remote and, in one sense, unimportant war, prepared it for another and a severer trial that was at hand. The impression produced in the Mediterranean, was also favorable, and the head of the Romish church is said to have publicly declared that America had done more for christendom against the barbarians than all the powers of Europe united."

This biographer adds: "His most confidential papers have been open to my inspection. They contain autograph letters from persons who occupied the loftiest stations and whose names will ever appear on the pages of history. They contain, too, letters from the humblest, from the sick, the poor, the disabled in their country's service. The latter have riveted my attention far more than the former, for they show how one, who has often been called 'The father of the American Navy,' was regarded by the friendless and the sorrowing."

In person the Commodore was six feet high, and of fine proportions. His attitude was erect, his step firm, and his whole appearance and port in the highest degree commanding. The style of his personal appearance was a union of gentleman-like outline, with size and force. In uniform he was a striking figure. His countenance varied with his feelings, and altogether he would be considered in any part of the world a man of mark. A distinguished clergyman relates, that seeing him and a celebrated Indian chief in the streets of Boston, he thought at the time that they were the noblest specimens of the human race he had ever observed.

His manners were polished and even courtly. He saw much of the world, and mingled in the best society, both at home and abroad. His address was pleasant, his voice melodious, and until weakened by disease, of great strength; and few could sing a patriotic song, or naval ode, with more taste or effect. His conversational powers were good; but he seldom spoke of himself or of his own actions, even to those with whom he was connected by the closest ties. The written compositions which bear his signature were certainly his own composition; and embracing as they do almost every topic, and thrown off, as most of them were, amid harassing cares, and during impaired health, they are sometimes faulty in style and defective in argument, but always direct, spirited and concise. They exhibit high mental vigor, and are generally clothed in well chosen expressions. His orders to his officers are remarkable for their simplicity and brevity.

Several biographies of Commodore Preble more or less extended have been printed. The earliest of these was written by Doctor Kirkland soon after his decease, and published in the *Port Folio* or *Polyanthos*, and a few copies struck off for private circulation among his friends. This was illustrated with an engraved likeness from the portrait in the possession of his family. Another life, written by Cooper, was published first in *Graham's Magazine* for May, 1845, and later in his volumes of *Naval Biography*. Still another Life, written by the Hon. Lorenzo Sabine, and occupying near 200 pages of the eleventh volume of *Sparks's American Biography*, was published in 1846, and is the text from which the greater part of this sketch is abridged. The author

had extraordinary facilities for producing the work, which to him was a labor of love. Besides these, there is Waldo's life, and a brief biographical sketch by his nephew, N. Deering, which was published in a Portland newspaper. Another, in the United States Nautical Magazine of 1846, by an unknown hand—and notices of him are to be found in all the American Cyclopædias, and Dictionaries of American Biography—and in the National Portrait Gallery of Distinguished Americans.

But two portraits of full size, for which he sat, are known to exist. The attitude in both is similar. Of these, the one in the possession of his grandson, Lt. Com. E. E. Preble, U. S. N., was considered by those who knew him living most intimately, to be the best. A good copy of it has been presented by his grandchildren to the Gallery of the Naval Academy at Annapolis. Another copy is in the parlor of the "Preble House" at Portland; and Mrs. Anderson, his granddaughter, has a third. The other portrait, painted, it is believed, by Stuart, belongs to the city of Boston, and hangs in Faneuil Hall. It has been often engraved, and an engraving from it is attached to this memoir. Besides these, there is a miniature of the Commodore taken in Italy, in the possession of his family, which is not considered a good likeness—and the profile bust on the medal* presented by Congress, for which he is said to have sat. A similar profile in porcelain, perhaps cast from the die of the medal, is in the collection of the Naval Lyceum at the New York Navy Yard.

The papers left by Commo. Preble, illustrating as they do quite fully the earliest years of our Naval History, are thought by judges to be of great value, and his grandchildren contemplate having them arranged and prepared for publication, that the future naval heroes of our country may better know what he did, and how great he was.

His remains were first placed in the family vault of his wife's ancestors, the Deerings, but after remaining there near forty years they were removed to another tomb, which had been prepared for them by his son, in the same old burial place, on Munjoy Hill, Portland, Me. The remains of his only son, with those of his long surviving widow, are now united in this same receptacle. A plain but massive white marble monument has been placed over them, bearing on one of its faces this simple inscription:

EDWARD PREBLE,
CAPTAIN UNITED STATES NAVY.
DIED AUGUST 25, 1807,
AGED 47.

* This medal has been several times engraved. The best engraving of it was published in Graham's Magazine some years since, and has been used in other works on the Navy. It was engraved by the ruling process over the face of a bronze copy of the medal, of which it is therefore a fac simile. The wood-cut attached to this memoir is taken from Lossing's History of the War of 1812, and is the full size of the medal.