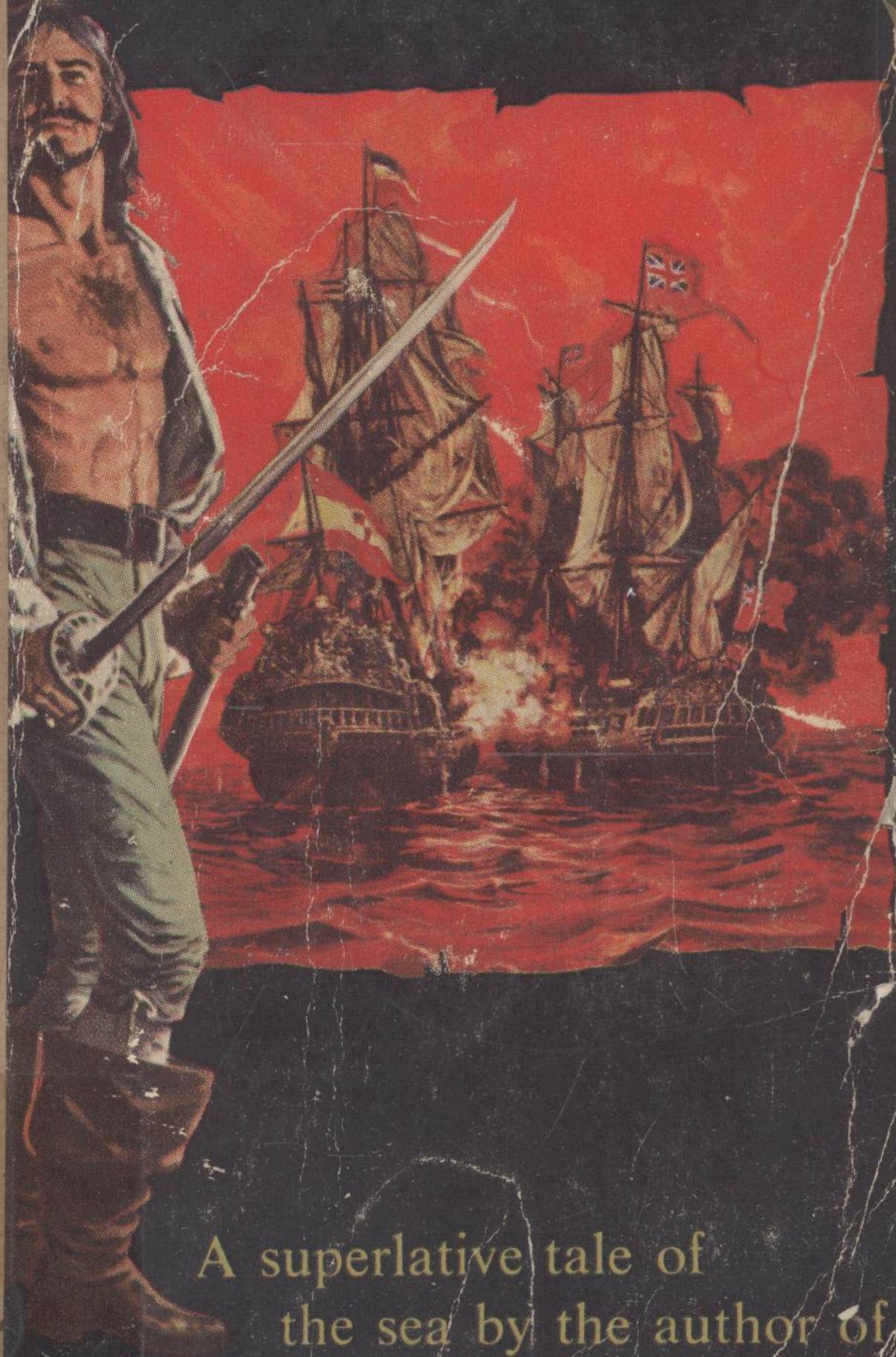


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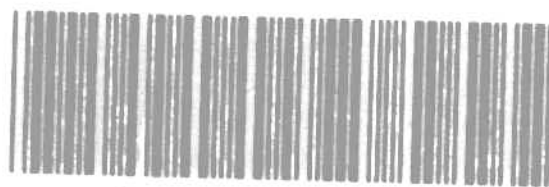
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Little, Brown edition published February, 1961

GIANT CARDINAL edition published June, 1962
1st printing.....April, 1962



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in War and in Peace

Foreword

IT WAS IN LONDON, 1946, while I was occupying a bed in the Station Hospital, that I chanced upon a copy of Pascoe Thomas's *Journal* and became irrevocably intrigued by Commodore George Anson's epic voyage. Then and there, I resolved, for better or for worse, to attempt to describe this modern Odyssey.

Unfortunately it was necessary to omit, or merely to refer in passing, to much fascinating incident. The mutiny on the *Wager* in itself is deserving of a long and exciting novel. The almost incredible smallboat voyages made by Captain Cheap and the mutinous seamen also are replete with examples of incredible suffering, of unyielding tenacity of purpose and of villainy or devotion to duty.

Alas, that, in the interests of story length, it was necessary to gloss over the Commodore's second visit to Canton and his historic negotiations with the Chantuck, or Viceroy, for it was on that occasion that George Anson's diplomatic genius manifested itself to secure, in China, rights and privileges for the navies of the world which were enjoyed until the Red Star became ascendant over what once had been the Celestial Empire.

It is to John Masefield's incomparable *Sea Life in Nelson's Time* that I owe so many details concerning the plan, the discipline, the duties, the customs and the food—such as it was—aboard a British ship-of-the-line. After conducting a considerable research on the subject I feel reasonably safe in assuming that, after Anson had effected his reforms, the passage of a little more than a hundred years would have brought relatively few changes in life—and death—aboard ships of the Royal Navy.

To touch with one's own hands the log so meticulously kept

by Lieutenant Peirce Brett lent a rare thrill, while to read some of George Anson's few official reports—he loathed paperwork—became a supreme moment when I reflected upon the terrible conditions under which he must have penned them.

Throughout, I have referred constantly—aside from Thomas's *Journal*—to the Reverend Richard Walter's scholarly *Account* abrim as it is with useful and colorful detail.

For details of the *Wager's* loss I relied largely on the lively, if somewhat naïve, observations of Midshipman John Byron, who was serving aboard that unfortunate vessel when she was lost.

It has always appeared curious to me that while almost every English-speaking person has heard of Horatio Nelson, very few indeed know anything at all about George Anson, who, in fact, made possible Nelson's historic career some forty to fifty years later.

Justly, Anson has been termed—if not remembered—as the “Father of the Modern Royal Navy.” As such, is he not then to be considered the “Grandfather of the United States Navy”?

It was he who, in 1748, finally persuaded the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty for the first time to put the officers and men of the Royal Navy into uniform—in uniforms designed by Anson himself. Until that time, all naval personnel had been forced to wear civilian garb—to their vast disadvantage when on foreign duty.

When appointed to the Board of Admiralty, 1745, he at once instituted reforms and set about rooting out that corruption and incompetence in the Admiralty and at the Royal Victualing and Dockyards which had subjected him and his men to some of the most appalling sufferings ever recorded in the history of seafaring.

Among this brilliant and well-loved officer's accomplishments is the fact that, in 1755, he organized the celebrated Corps of Royal Marines on a permanent basis, i.e., composed of soldiers especially trained for service at sea.

Not only was George Anson an excellent organizer and diplomat, he was a fighting Admiral as well. In 1747, after a hard, cleverly fought action with the Marquis de la Jonquière, he captured nineteen of the Frenchman's thirty-eight ships.

He was, moreover, a supreme judge of human nature: of the officers and midshipmen, who accompanied him on th

epic voyage, nine later achieved flag rank. Of these, nine became Rear Admirals, seven Vice-Admirals, three were appointed full Admirals and three eventually won the highest of Naval honors—First Lord of the Admiralty.

In this book I have departed from a long-established practice by adding an appendix, in order to list these above-mentioned flag officers and to indicate the few purely fictional characters.

On those several occasions when Anson is described as addressing the Ship's Company, I have reproduced his remarks *verbatim*, as recorded by men present and have not attempted to edit his sometimes quaint phraseology.

Needless to say, all incidents, even trivial ones, described in this book—with the exception of the obviously personal activities of fictional characters—are based on fact. Excerpts from various journals, accounts, narratives, diaries, etc., written by Anson's companions on this voyage are reproduced just as they appear.

It has been no easy matter to attempt to present an account of conditions prevalent aboard the expedition's ships without overloading the narrative with nautical terms or dwelling in too much detail upon the frightful sufferings of Anson and his men over a period of almost four years.

Since this is a story of combat, courage and survival, it is possible that some of my readers may have been similarly tested, almost two hundred years later, on Tinian, Guam, Taiwan and off Cape Espiritu Santo—all of which were well known to Anson's men.

To Mrs. W. A. Anson of Ronan's Lea, Brailes, Oxfordshire, I owe many thanks for having kindly granted permission to reproduce on the book jacket that splendid portrait of the Commodore which now graces her home.

Those who were most responsible for aiding me in the preparation of this book are: Jeanne Hand Mason—"Incidentally" of *The Young Titan* foreword—who has worked long, hard and intelligently as my principal secretary, and Mrs. Neville Burnett-Herkes who, years ago, assisted me with *Three Harbours*.

My sincere appreciation goes also to Miss Margaret Franklin, who, in London, spared me much tedious basic research in the Public Records Office and in the British Museum.

Finally, I wish once again to thank Mr. Robert H. Haynes, Assistant Librarian of Widener Library, Harvard College, Cambridge, Massachusetts, for his able and judicious assistance.

F. VAN WYCK MASON

Hampton Head
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Prologue

BY THE BRIEF unearthly glare of lightning flashes which steadily were becoming more vivid, Peter Vesey—Doctor of Medicine by virtue of degrees hard-earned at Oxford and Edinburgh Universities—could glimpse through a ragged pattern of trees a faint sheen created by the Upper Thames. Although ruffled by the storm's first warning puffs, it yet wound slowly, serenely towards the village of Henley and the home which recently he'd constructed on its southern bank.

The young physician—he was only twenty-nine—felt sure rain must begin to fall at any moment. The fitful wind, rising, stirred a nearby orchard and sent apple blossom petals drifting across the rutted road like the delicate ghosts of snowflakes.

His mount, a strong young mare, seemed to sense the impending downpour as well as he, for she pointed delicate ears downstream, in which direction forage and a dry stall were awaiting her. Gradually she quickened her trot.

Now thunder began to reverberate down the river valley creating a rumble like that of bowling balls rolling along some Titan's alley. The rhythmic *clink-clinking* of instruments and medicine bottles crammed into Peter Vesey's saddlebags quickened when, riding with the ease of one reared in a hunting saddle, he spurred his increasingly nervous mount to an easy canter.

The time, on this warm late spring night, Vesey judged to be near eleven, so, of course, houses without exception were shuttered and dark. Watchdogs, however, clamored fiercely at the mare's dainty hoofbeats.

What a surprise that Granny Swinden, so sorely stricken with calentures, had taken that wholly unexpected turn for the better. The tough old woman had begun to rally from

the minute he'd entered her cottage, soberly prepared to ease her passing. In fact, Mrs. Swinden got so much better and had begun to chatter so garrulously he hadn't seen any necessity for lingering until daylight.

A sudden crackling peal of thunder caused the mare to shy violently, to stand half-crouched with quivering legs gathered under her. A reassuring pressure on the reins and a few soothing words served to set her moving forward again an instant before the night became filled with a wet confusion which quickly drenched Dr. Vesey to his smallclothes.

The wind increased and blew so hard that a succession of twigs, wet leaves and even small branches were dashed into the rider's face. Swiftly, the dirt road degenerated into a quagmire intermittently revealed by the lightning's blue-white throbbing. He glimpsed a family of ghostly-looking swans, cowering in a reed bed on the Thames's farther bank. When the thundering approached an ear-shattering crescendo the mare, stung by hard-driven drops, began to plunge and rear, so, to steady her, Dr. Vesey reined to a walk.

Splashing slowly on through the downpour, Vesey wished the hour weren't so advanced, but he encouraged himself by thinking that Pamela probably wouldn't have gone to bed. She wasn't in the least frightened by lightning. On the contrary she so greatly enjoyed a thunderstorm's noise and vivid majesty that she might very well still be up to brew a cup of tea.

Rain began to pelt his eyelids so hard that he had to shield them behind a raised forearm. A good thing, he reflected, that his mount could sense where she was going; he hadn't the least notion.

The worst of the storm's fury seemed to have exhausted itself when, with cold trickles running down his back and chest, Dr. Vesey splashed into an avenue of majestic oaks at the end of which lay Minden—his home. For all that the house was small, it was of neatly dressed gray stone, comfortable and smart architecturally. How fortunate he'd been to be able to construct this dwelling for his bride upon the site of an ancient manor house which had burnt down a few years ago: otherwise, he never could have boasted of such venerable trees lining Minden's driveway.

To his vast relief a light, warm and cheery, *was* glowing through lessening rain, which undoubtedly meant that Pamela

had remained awake to view this terrifying display of lightning.

He made no effort to check the mare when she began to trot.

What incredible luck. In a very few minutes now, Pamela would be brewing tea. He visualized her, dark and slim, fetching brandy in a cut-glass decanter. Lord knew he could use such refreshment. Since quitting Minden, late in the afternoon, he must easily have covered fifteen miles and that after having stayed up the whole of the previous night delivering his sister of a squalling, beet-red daughter.

Vesey's streaming features formed a stiff smile on recalling the way the midwife had glowered at him. Undoubtedly she, like the rest of England, never had heard of Dr. William Hunter—the "male midwife"—behind whom he had "walked" to learn the "Paris Method." He'd come eventually to agree that it was *not* beneath a physician's dignity, but rather his duty, to assist at childbirth.

Chilled and weary as he was, Vesey took time to rub down the mare thoroughly once he'd unsaddled and unbridled her. Next he made sure there was a generous bait of grain in her feedbox and pitchforked plenty of hay into the manger.

Slinging sodden saddlebags over one shoulder, Dr. Vesey splashed through a succession of puddles and, smiling, turned his front door's silvered knob. The smile faded when, on calling a greeting, he got no response.

Vaguely uneasy, he hung the heavy leather bags to a stag-horn rack and sought Pamela in the pantry. Perhaps she'd heard the mare's hoofs and had gone out to put the kettle on? Although his wife wasn't there he forebore to rouse the servants. Lord knew the poor creatures were required to remain on call from early morning until he returned from his rounds which, sometimes, was very late at night.

Nor was Pamela in the library, which puzzled him, since a decanter of sherry and a half-filled wineglass stood on a table. The young physician's alarm mounted because he recalled seeing a similar partially filled glass on the living room mantelpiece.

The storm appeared to be gathering fresh fury; lightning again blazed very nearby and heart-stilling thunderclaps caused windowpanes and shutters to rattle. Dripping dark spots along the carpets, Vesey hurriedly ranged through the

upper floor and observed that although the four-poster's covers had been turned down there was no trace of Pamela.

Now thoroughly alarmed, the doctor had started below when he halted on the staircase and began softly to laugh. The summerhouse! Of course Pamela had gone out there; from which vantage point she could see the river and more fully enjoy the storm's vivid fury. Why hadn't he recalled before that she was given to doing this?

His muddied riding boots crunched loudly upon the driveway's wet gravel, but the thundering effectively concealed his progress.

Urged on by an especially vicious squall, Vesey covered the last few yards to the summerhouse at a run and dashed inside. As he was flinging open the door a very brilliant flash of lightning illuminated the interior in such detail that he could have read titles on a series of flower prints gracing the summerhouse's far wall.

The sudden glare also revealed, in pitiless clarity, two figures extended upon the rattan settee on which Pamela often reposed during pleasant weather. The person above showed dark, while the one beneath shone vividly white. This, Vesey realized, was because the woman's dress had been pulled so high as to expose the entire length of long, slim legs which glimmered pale as those of an alabaster statue.

A roaring which made the thunder's crash pale to insignificance commenced in Peter Vesey's head. Emitting a strangled growl, he bounded forward.



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