

SKETCHES OF DISTINGUISHED MEN.

COMMODORE NAPIER.

[The Napier family has become so distinguished both in the Army and Navy of England for gallantry and heroic conduct that we submit the following sketch of the great sailor, Commodore Napier, to our readers as one of peculiar interest, at this moment, in our next number we will give an authentic history of the many deeds of arms that have turned the eyes of all nations to the gallant Sir Charles Napier, recently selected to take command of the British force in India.]

What man could be named, I should like to know, more deserving of a place in my portrait gallery, than the gallant sailor whose recent brilliant exploits in the East, are the theme of every tongue and the subject of universal admiration? The Commodore is a native of Stirlingshire, in Scotland, and still retains his northern accent as strongly as if he had only quitted the land of "moor and mountain" a few months ago. He is a singularly kind-hearted, good-natured man. There is an openness and manifest sincerity in his manner, which render him a favourite the moment you are introduced to him. He has no lofty opinion of himself; he appears as if unconscious that he had ever done anything out of the common way, or which merits distinction. Like Lord Nelson, he knows not what fear is. He is quite as cool and collected in the heat of conflict, and when the roar of cannon is reverberating in his ears, as if he were sitting in his own cabin smoking his pipe and quaffing his grog before going to bed.

I have said that Commodore Napier is an open-hearted, straight-forward man. The remark however only applies to his conduct in his private or individual capacity. In all matters appertaining to the naval service, he preserves a rigid secrecy, even from his most intimate acquaintances. Even when they suspect, from his motions, that he has some great enterprise in contemplation, and endeavour to learn what that enterprise is by putting ingenious questions to him, he invariably preserves his own secret. Previous to his undertaking the expedition to Portugal, where he performed such brilliant exploits, his more intimate acquaintances shrewdly suspected that he was about to be engaged in active and important service, and, anxious to ascertain what it was, used to put the question to him—"Napier, come, do tell us what you are going to be about." His uniform answer, "You shall hear by and-by." It is generally understood that he conceals all his intended military movements even from the nearest and dearest members of his own family.

The Commodore has on several occasions been a candidate for a seat in the Legislature. In 1833, he contested the representation of Portsmouth, in the Tory interest. In the course of his canvass, in answer to the question who he was he gave the following rich and racy account of himself and his public services:—

"In the course of my canvass," said the gallant officer, "I have been asked 'who I am?'—I'll tell you, I am Captain Charles Napier, who five-and-twenty years ago commanded the *Recruit* brig, in the West Indies, and who had the honour of being twenty-four hours under the guns of three French line-of-battle ships, flying from a British squadron, the nearest of

which with the exception of the *Hawk* brig, was five to six miles astern: the greatest part of the time I kept flying double-shotted broadsides into them. One of these ships, the *Hautpolt*, only was captured by the *Pompey* and *Castor*; the other two escaped by superior sailing. Sir Alexander Cochrane, my commander-in-chief, promoted me on the spot into her. At the siege of Martinique, the *Aeolus*, *Cleopatra*, and *Recruit*, were ordered to beat up in the night, between Pigeon Island and the main, and anchor close to Fort Edward; the enemy fearing an attack, burnt their shipping. At daylight in the morning, it appeared to me that Port Edward was abandoned; this however was doubted; I offered to ascertain the fact, and with five men landed in open day, scaled the walls, and planted the union jack. Fortunately I was undiscovered from Fort Bourbon, which stood about one hundred yards off, and commanded it. On this being reported to Sir Alexander Cochrane, a regiment was landed in the night, Fort Edward was taken possession of, and the mortars turned against the enemy. I am in possession of a letter from Sir A. Cochrane, saying that 'my conduct was the means of saving many lives, and of shortening the siege of Martinique.' I had once the misfortune of receiving a precious licking from a French corvette; the first shot she fired broke my thigh, and a plumper carried away my mainmast. The enemy escaped, but the English flag was not tarnished. On my return to England in command of the *Jason*, I was turned out of her by a Tory Admiralty, because I had not interest; but as I could not lead an idle life, I served a campaign with the army in Portugal as a volunteer, when I was again wounded. At the battle of Busaco, I had the honour of carrying off the field my gallant friend and relative, Colonel Napier, now near me, who was shot in the face. Busaco was not the only field where he shed his blood; at Corunna he was left for dead, but, thank God, he escaped with six wounds. On my return to England I was appointed to the *Thames*, in the Mediterranean; and if I could bring the inhabitants of the Neapolitan coast into the room, they would tell you that from Naples to the Faro Point there was not a spot where I did not leave my mark, and brought off with me upwards of one hundred sail of gun-boats and merchant vessels. I had the honour of running the *Thames* and *Furiente* into the small mole of Ponza, which was strongly defended, and before they could recover from their surprise, I captured the island without the loss of a man. I was then removed to the *Euryalus*, and had the good fortune to fall in with two French frigates and a schooner: I chased them in the night close into Calvi, in the island of Corsica, passing close under the stern of one, *plumpering* her as I passed; and though we were going eight knots, I tried to run aboard of her consort, who was a little outside standing athwart my hawse; the night was dark, the land close, and she succeeded in crossing me, but I drove her ashore on the rocks, where she was totally wrecked, and her consort was obliged to anchor close to her. The *Euryalus* then wore and got off, almost brushing the shore as she passed. These two ships were afterwards ascertained to be *armée en flûte*, mounted 22 guns each, and the schooner 14. From the Mediterranean I was ordered to America; and if my gallant friend Sir James Gordon was here, he would have told you how I did my duty on that long and arduous service up the Potomac; he would have told you