

**OLD IRONSIDES, THE HERO OF
TRIPOLI AND 1812, AND OTHER
TALES AND ADVENTURES ON
SEA AND LAND**

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Old Ironsides, the hero of Tripoli and 1812, and other tales and adventures on sea and land by
Edward S. Ellis

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EDWARD S. ELLIS

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BY

EDWARD S. ELLIS, A.M.

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L.C.

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OLD IRONSIDES.

REMINSCENCES OF ADMIRAL CHARLES STEWART.

It was during the Civil War that I first saw Charles Stewart, popularly known as "Old Ironsides," but generally called Commodore Stewart by his neighbors. He was living at White Hill, on the outskirts of Bordenton, N. J., and made famous afterward as the residence of Mrs. Delia Parnell, his daughter-in-law.

It was on a crisp winter day in mid-winter. When I presented myself at the door I was told that the commodore was at work in the barn. Going thither I found the great naval hero busily pouring corn into a sheller, the handle of which a lusty Irishman was turning. The commodore good-naturedly laid aside his implement and briskly led the way to the house, where we chatted for a couple of hours. He insisted upon my coming again, and I did so quite frequently, through summer and winter, until near his final sickness. He was one of the most entertaining men I ever knew, and with such a wealth of reminiscence as he possessed it was a treat to sit beneath the shade of the trees, or within his old-fashioned reception

room, and hear him tell of events that had roused the admiration of his countrymen more than half a century before.

Admiral Stewart at this time was nearly ninety years old. He was below the medium height, with scant white hair, and a peculiar redness of the eyelids, caused, as he told me by the impalpable dust from Sahara, to which he and the American fleet were exposed, in the Mediterranean, during the war with Tripoli in 1803-04.

His face had the florid color often seen with those who have spent many years on the ocean, and when he laughed, as he did quite often, this crimson hue quickly deepened and extended to his neck and forehead. His teeth were reduced to three or four, and he never used false ones, but he was continually chewing with a gritting sound, as though trying to masticate some obdurate substance with the gums in front. He used snuff freely (he never smoked or chewed) and this produced a visible effect on his rather large nose.

I was astonished to find how far back his memory extended, and, as is frequently the case with extremely aged persons, he recalled incidents three-quarters of a century old with more clearness than those of a recent date. He was born in 1778, and his commission as midshipman was dated in 1798. It was therefore ten years older than that of General Scott.

When I asked him whether he had ever seen General Washington he said:

"Oh, yes, several times. I sat next to him at a public dinner in 1798. We touched glasses, and

he thanked me in his grave, impressive manner for a rather highflown compliment I paid him."

"Did you ever see Paul Jones?"

"I was at the old coffee-house in Philadelphia one day when he was pointed out to me. I studied him closely, for you know he achieved his fame during the Revolution. When I saw him it was just before he left the country to enter the service of Russia. Speaking of General Washington, I may say I have dined with every President since, excepting Harrison and Taylor, who died shortly after their inauguration."

"How far back does your memory extend?" I asked.

"To 1781. (This remark was made in 1867, so that the veteran recalled events that had taken place eighty-six years before.) I was three years old at the time, and had been such a bad baby that the nurse told me the Old Boy was sure to come after me. Shortly after there was great excitement in the streets, and looking out I saw the figure of the Evil One, pitchfork in hand, about to claim the body of a man represented by an effigy. This was Benedict Arnold. I was certain that Satan was after me, and became so terrified that I began screaming and would have gone into convulsions but for the nurse, who laid me across her knee and gave me such a spanking that the pain drove everything else from my mind. That nurse was a sensible woman, and I have recommended her remedy many times since."

"What led you to go to sea?"

"Consumption ran in our family, several mem-