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

*FREDERICK C. LEINER*

**OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS**

# *The*
# END
# *of*
# BARBARY
# TERROR

Also by Frederick C. Leiner

*Millions for Defense: The Subscription Warships of 1798*

# *The* END *of* BARBARY TERROR

## *America's 1815 War Against the Pirates of North Africa*

Frederick C. Leiner

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS
2006

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Oxford University Press, Inc., publishes works that
further Oxford University's objective of excellence
in research, scholarship, and education.

Oxford New York
Auckland Cape Town Dar es Salaam Hong Kong Karachi
Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Nairobi
New Delhi Shanghai Taipei Toronto

With offices in
Argentina Austria Brazil Chile Czech Republic France Greece
Guatemala Hungary Italy Japan Poland Portugal Singapore
South Korea Switzerland Thailand Turkey Ukraine Vietnam

Copyright © 2006 by Frederick C. Leiner

Published by Oxford University Press, Inc.
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016
www.oup.com

Oxford is a registered trademark of Oxford University Press

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced,
stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means,
electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise,
without the prior permission of Oxford University Press.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Leiner, Frederick C., 1958–
The end of Barbary terror : America's 1815 war against the pirates of North Africa /
by Frederick C. Leiner.
p. cm.
Includes bibliographical references (p. ) and index.
ISBN-13: 978-0-19-518994-0
ISBN-10: 0-19-518994-9
1. United States—History—War with Algeria, 1815.
2. Pirates—Africa, North—History—19th century. I. Title.
E365.L45 2006 973.4'7—dc22 2005026644

1 3 5 7 9 8 6 4 2

Printed in the United States of America
on acid-free paper

*To my family*

*This page intentionally left blank*

# *Contents*

*Introduction* 1

Chapter One

*The Odyssey of the* Edwin 5

Chapter Two

*At War with Algiers* 39

Chapter Three

*Fitting Out the Squadrons* 53

Chapter Four

*Mediterranean Triumph* 87

Chapter Five

*Unfinished Business* 123

Chapter Six

*The Return* 141

Chapter Seven

*The British Bombardment and an "Occular Demonstration"* 151

*Epilogue* 177

*Appendices* 183

I: The Navy's April 15, 1815, Orders to Commodore Stephen Decatur 183

II: W. D. Robinson's May 9, 1815, Memorandum to William Shaler 187

III: Treaty Between the United States and the Dey of Algiers, June 30, 1815 189

*Acknowledgments* 195

*Source Notes* 199

*Bibliography* 221

*Index* 229

In such an enlightened, in such a liberal age, how is it possible the great maritime powers of Europe should submit to pay an annual tribute to the little piratical States of Barbary? Would to Heaven we had a navy able to reform those enemies to mankind, or crush them into non-existence.

—George Washington to the Marquis
de la Fayette, August 15, 1786

And never again will our Jonathan pay
A tribute to potentate, pirate or Dey
Nor any, but that which forever is given:
The tribute to valor and virtue and heaven.

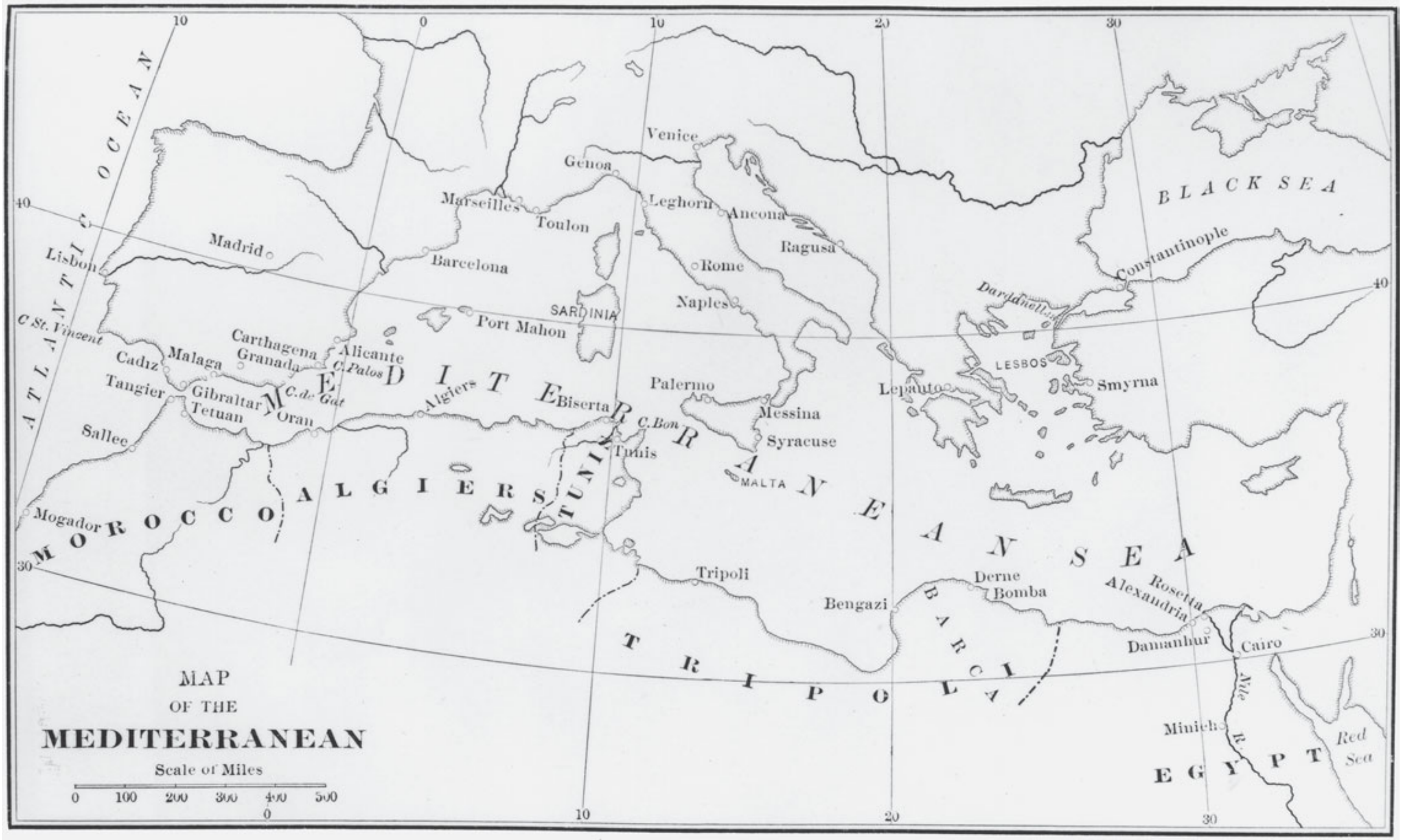
* * *

And again if his Deyship should bully and fume,
Or hereafter his claim to this tribute resume,
We'll send him Decatur once more to defy him,
And his motto shall be, if you please, Carpe Diem.

—Dr. C——, "Carpe Diem"

*This page intentionally left blank*

# *The*
# END
# *of*
# BARBARY
# TERROR


MAP
OF THE
MEDITERRANEAN
Scale of Miles
0
100
200
300
400
500
ATLANTIC OCEAN
MEDITERRANEAN SEA
BLACK SEA
MOROCCO
ALGIERS
TUNIS
TRIPOLI
BARCA
EGYPT
Red Sea
Nile R.
Lisbon
Madrid
C St. Vincent
Cadiz
Malaga
Granada
Carthagena
Alicante
C. Palos
C. de Gat
Tangier
Gibraltar
Tetuan
Oran
Sallee
Mogador
Algiers
Barcelona
Marseilles
Toulon
Port Mahon
Genoa
Venice
Leghorn
Ancona
Ragusa
Rome
Naples
SARDINIA
Biserta
C. Bon
Tunis
Palermo
Messina
Syracuse
MALTA
Tripoli
Bengazi
Derne
Bomba
Lepanto
LESBOS
Smyrna
Dardanelles
Constantinople
Rosetta
Alexandria
Damanhur
Cairo
Minieh
10
0
10
20
30
40
30

Map of the Mediterranean Sea. From Gardner W. Allen, *Our Navy and the Barbary Corsairs* (1905), author's collection.

# *Introduction*

In 1762, when the philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously began *The Social Contract* with the observation that man, who was born free, is everywhere in chains, the "chains" he referred to were the constraints imposed by living in a society with laws and government. His words might also have been taken literally, because almost everywhere in the eighteenth century, men were in chains. Slavery, or something akin to it, was a common feature of Rousseau's world and had existed from time immemorial. The Hebrew Bible, the Christian New Testament, and the Muslim Koran all accepted slavery, albeit with restrictions to ameliorate its hardships. By the time Rousseau was writing, the transatlantic trade in black Africans had been a fixture for more than two hundred years and ultimately would ship ten to twelve million people in chains to the Americas. But slavery was not limited to blacks nor to the New World. In Russia, millions of serfs lived a brutish existence tied to the land and at the sufferance of their manorial lords until Tsar Alexander II freed them in 1861. In the Levant and Istanbul, the burgeoning population needed bread, leading the Tartar rulers of the Crimea to raid the Ukraine, Russia, and Caucuses for hundreds of thousands of white Christians to work as slaves growing wheat in the steppe.

At the time Rousseau wrote, slavery had existed in Islamic North Africa, the so-called Barbary states, for centuries, and was a constant threat to Europe. From dozens of ports in Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, Islamic corsairs darted out in their row galleys, and later, in their sailing xebecs and feluccas, to seize European ships with their Christian crews and passengers (and cargoes). They boldly landed bands of armed pirates on the coasts of southern Europe and carted off peasant farmers and nobles, fishermen and goat herders, clerics and tradesmen, to slavery in Barbary. The corsairs sometimes seized the entire population of a village; coastal areas of Andalusia, Sicily, Calabria, Tuscany, and the Greek islands were depopulated by "manstealing" over the course of several hundred years.

Barbary slavery differed from slavery elsewhere both in the spirit in which the corsairs operated and the way Barbary societies used slaves. As historian Robert C. Davis notes in *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters*, "in their traffic in Christians there was also always an element of revenge, almost of *jihad*—for the wrongs of 1492 [when Ferdinand and Isabella finally expelled the Moors from Spain], for the centuries of crusading violence that had preceded them, and for the ongoing religious struggle between Christian and Muslim. . . ." But the Barbary slave trade was driven as much by economics as by religious ideology. The corsairs needed oarsmen for their row galleys, and the captives were even more valuable when traded for ransom. Factoring in losses from the plague, malnourishment, mistreatment, and periodic ransomings, Professor Davis estimates that in the 250 years of peak slave-taking by the Barbary corsairs, from 1530 to 1780, at least one million, and perhaps as many as one and one-quarter million, white Christians were enslaved in Islamic North Africa. Even in the eighteenth century, as the number of slaves the Barbary pirates needed dwindled because sailing ships had replaced galleys, approximately 175,000 white Christians were carried off into slavery.

When the United States secured its independence in 1783, the new republic faced the slave-taking menace in the Mediterranean without the protection that the British navy had afforded to its ships when America was thirteen British colonies. As merchant vessels flying the new Stars and Stripes entered the Mediterranean looking for trading opportunities, the Barbary corsairs presented a constant and galling problem. The governments of Europe either paid tribute to them to prevent their subjects from being enslaved, or were too poor to do so. For the United States, free trade was both a policy and a belief: trade would increase wealth even as it increased freedom. But with no navy and little money, the new republic's merchant ships and crewmen were prime targets for capture and enslavement. The promises of free trade were imperiled.

John Foss, a seaman in the brig *Polly* out of Newburyport, Massachusetts, which sailed from Baltimore bound to Cadiz, Spain, in September

1793, was one of those who became enslaved. Like many who experienced slavery in Algiers, Foss wrote a detailed account of his experience. When the *Polly* was still about 70 miles off the Spanish coast near the end of October 1793, a lookout spotted a brig flying the British flag, but the experienced American seamen recognized by the cut of her sails that she was not a British ship: they supposed her to be a French privateer flying a false flag as a *ruse de guerre*, given the war raging between Britain and France. The strange brig approached, and the *Polly* stopped to wait for her. Since the United States and France were at peace, the master of the *Polly* thought they had nothing to fear. As the distance closed, an officer "dressed in the Christian habit, and . . . the only person we could yet see on her deck" called over the water in English to ask the name of the ship, and where from and whither bound. No one on the *Polly* suspected anything until they spotted the brig's crew, which had been concealed, and

> saw by their dress and long beards that they were Moors, or Algerines. Our feelings at this unwelcome sight, are more easily imagined than described. . . . She then hove too under our lee, when we heard a most terrible shouting, clapping of hands, huzzaing, &c. — And saw a great number of men rise up with their heads above the [gunwale], dressed in the Turkish habit like them we saw on the poop.

The Algerine brig lowered a launch, and about one hundred corsairs, armed with scimitars, pistols, pikes, and knives, rowed across and clambered up the side of the *Polly*. The pirates herded the Americans into the forward part of their own ship, threatening them in several languages. They then went below, and "broke open all the Trunks, and Chests, there were on board, and plundered all our bedding, cloathing, books, . . . and every moveable article." Returning on deck, they stripped every crew member of everything except the shirt and trousers he was wearing, and they conveyed them back to the Algerine brig, which sailed off to Algiers. The men were packed below decks with vermin attacking their bodies and clothes and were given little to eat.

Upon landing, the Americans were taken to the palace of the ruler, the dey of Algiers, through a surging crowd which stunned them "with the shouts, clapping of hands and other exclamations of joy from the inhabitants; thanking God for their great success and victories over so many Christian dogs, and unbelievers. . . ." The dey greeted them with a speech declaring he would never make peace with their country, finishing, "now I have got you, you Christian dogs, you shall eat stones." The next morning, a heavy chain link was hammered around each man's ankle, and Foss called the “dreadful clanking” sound of the iron chain each man had to carry “the most terrible noise I ever heard.” The captured men then began their work as slaves, mining rocks in the nearby mountains and hauling them by bodily force down to the port to repair or extend the seawall at the harbor, or working at the port carrying freight on their backs, goaded along by guards with pointed sticks, like cattle prods, with dreadful beatings or death never a distant possibility.

At first, the United States responded to Barbary slavery with powerless outrage. In the early 1790s, the new republic had no navy. Many Americans questioned the need to build one and worried about the risks to civil liberties and the huge expenditures necessary in creating and maintaining a naval establishment. With no effective power to contest Barbary slave-taking, the United States followed traditional European practice and made an enormous payment to Algiers to free its seamen, including John Foss, and promised annual tribute to purchase immunity from Barbary slavery. As the months and years went by, the United States built a navy, even as it dutifully made its yearly payments to Algiers, continuing the practice well into the new century. But when Algiers, the most powerful Barbary state, began once again to carry American seamen off their ships into slavery, the United States, flush with nationalist feeling after the end of the War of 1812, decided it would no longer pay ransom to bring its people home. The United States would speak from the mouths of its cannon; the navy was sent to put an end to Barbary terror.

# Chapter One

# *The Odyssey of the* Edwin

In March 1812, the brig *Edwin* sailed from her home port of Salem, Massachusetts, to New York, and then for Gibraltar and Malta, probably carrying a cargo of food and provisions for the British army garrisons there. The trading voyage of the *Edwin* was tinged with danger. She may have sailed with a British license to carry grain to supply Lord Wellington's army in Spain—a lucrative business that violated American trade laws. Her owners, captain, and crew knew that in departing American waters, she was sailing in the face of an embargo the federal government planned to lay on American shipping, which President Madison presented to Congress on April 1, 1812, but was widely known to be in the offing. The Madison administration pushed for the 1812 embargo to allow thousands of American seamen aboard hundreds of American merchant ships to reach United States ports before the anticipated declaration of war with Britain. The new law did not stop the *Edwin*, which not only wanted to land her cargo at British-owned Mediterranean naval ports, but also expected to return with a load of import goods. To do so, she would have to sail through threats from the British navy, and as she journeyed halfway up the Mediterranean, she would be in waters unsettled by British-French hostilities in the ongoing Napoleonic Wars and the lurking dangers from seagoing corsairs of the semi-independent Barbary coastal states of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. After the *Edwin* sailed, the Essex Fire and Marine Insurance Company of Salem issued an insurance policy on March 31, 1812, for $4,000 on the brig and its "effects." The company charged the named owners, Nathaniel Silsbee and Robert Stone of Salem, an 8 percent (or $320) premium to Gibraltar and back, an additional 1 percent premium if the *Edwin* went to any port "without the Straits [of Gibraltar]," 6 percent more if she ventured as far as Sicily, and a further 4 percent if her master, George Campbell Smith, had the audacity and luck to "go up as high as Smyrna" in present-day Turkey.

The *Edwin* was an unremarkable workhorse of a ship. Built on the Merrimack River at Amesbury, Massachusetts, in 1800, she had been sold and resold five times by the time of her voyage in the spring of 1812. She was a stubby, utilitarian, two-masted vessel with a square rig (the sails hanging perpendicular to the hull), only 71 feet long, slightly more than 21 feet in breadth, and with a depth of hold slightly less than 10 feet. Silsbee and Stone valued the *Edwin* at $7,500 despite the insurance policy for only half that amount. The owners, along with two other Salem merchants, James Devereaux and Dudley Pickman, crammed barrels, casks, and bags of goods valued at more than $14,000 into the hold of the *Edwin*, and they allowed the master, George Campbell Smith, to put aboard his own freight, worth another $4,000. When the *Edwin* departed from New York in March 1812, Smith needed a crew of only nine seamen to man the brig on a transatlantic trading voyage that must have been expected to last at least six months.

After touching at New York and landing some of her cargo at Gibraltar, the *Edwin* sailed on to Malta, reaching Valetta harbor on June 29. Neither British authorities ashore nor Master Smith could have known, in those days when letters were carried by sailing ships and messengers on horseback, that exactly eleven days earlier the United States had formally declared war against Great Britain. Not only was the *Edwin* trading with the enemy, but she was also at risk of seizure as a prize of war. After landing and selling her cargo and using the cash to buy a diverse cargo to take back to Salem—including wine, oils, sulfur, "blue vitrials," opium, linens, and spices—and signing on a New Hampshire man for the return voyage, the *Edwin* left Malta on August 5. Still unaware of the Anglo-American war, the *Edwin* began her return trek under Royal Navy convoy. But she was such a dull sailer that she lost the convoy one evening and was forced to sail on alone.

On August 25, 1812, off the southern coast of Spain, a lookout on the *Edwin* spotted a large ship bearing down on her. The crew was anxious. Five years before, a French privateer had stopped the *Edwin* on the Atlantic and sent over a boarding party to look at the brig and her papers. Adhering to the international law of neutral maritime rights—not always observed by privateers—the Frenchmen were content to ask if they might purchase a spare topmast; they did so and, with that, politely bid the *Edwin* au revoir. What happened in August 1812, however, was the nightmarish drama that all mariners in the Mediterranean feared. The pursuer, a frigate armed with two rows of cannon on her broadside, overhauled the *Edwin*. Although no account exists of the chase and capture of the *Edwin*, the scene was played out hundreds of times in that era, and there is little doubt of the essentials. As the distance closed, the pursuing vessel might have hoisted a green banner with white crescent and stars, the flag of Algiers, or she might have dispensed with identifying herself and fired a single cannon shot across the bow of the *Edwin*, the timeless display of force meant to be answered by force or submission. The unarmed *Edwin* must have heaved to, backing her topsails to stop and submit, as a boat put off from the Algerine frigate loaded with men. Rowed over to the *Edwin*, they would have clambered up her side armed with swords and pistols and, shrieking threatening words in Arabic, taken control of the brig. The crew of the *Edwin*, overwhelmed and unnerved, insulted and spat upon, surrendered. The captors stripped the American seamen of everything of value, even the clothes off their backs.

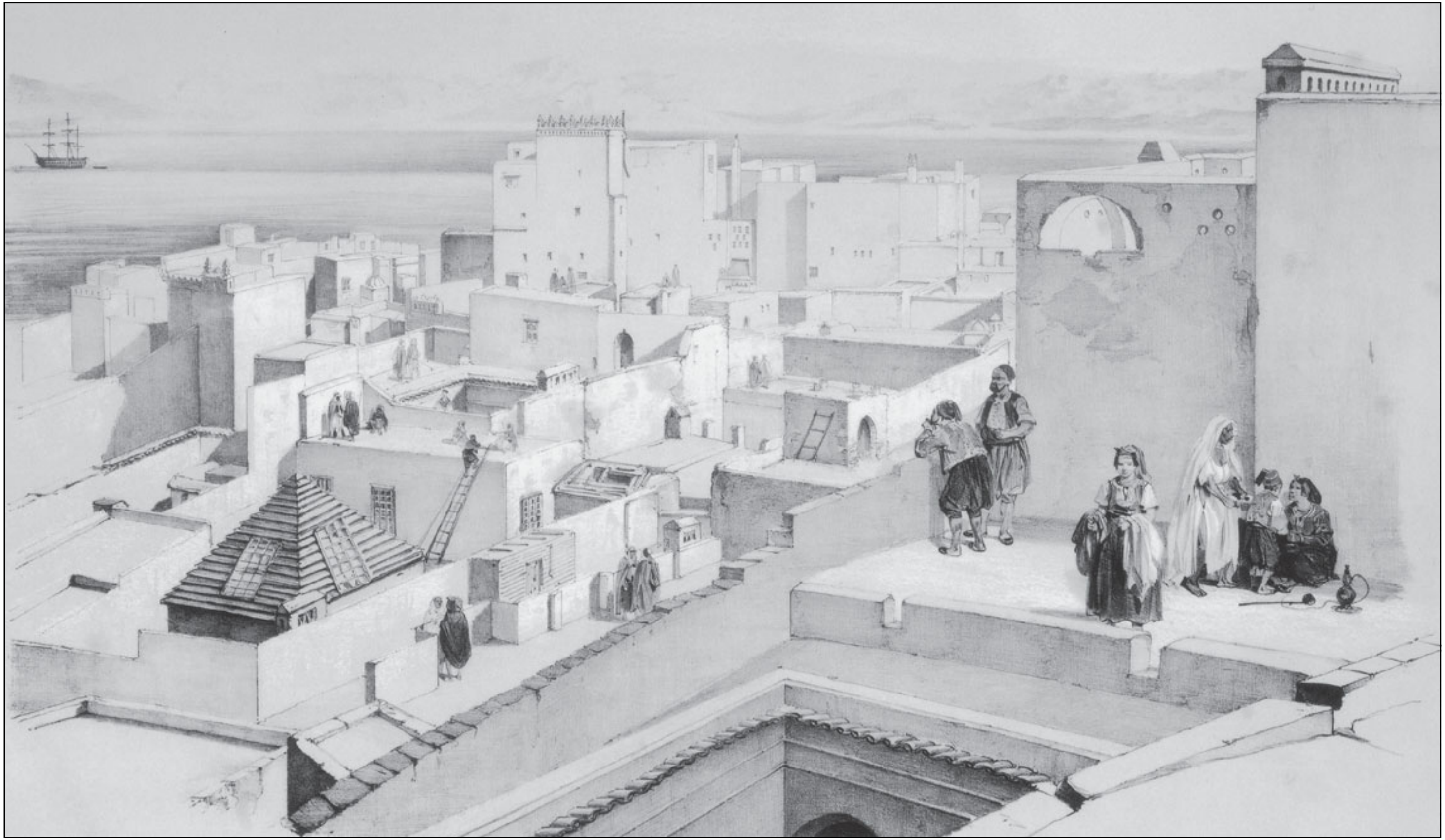
After a few days' sail, the captured *Edwin* entered the harbor of Algiers. While an Algerine court quickly adjudicated the brig a "good prize," and the *Edwin*'s freight was sold to benefit her new Algerine owners, George Campbell Smith and his crew were trundled ashore and, after being paraded and inspected, became slaves of the dey. Thrust into servitude, Smith did not set an example of stoicism and gallantry. His first letter, dated "Prison in Algiers, Augt. 30th, 1812," informed John Gavino, the United States consul at Gibraltar, that he was "a Slave at work on the Mole" of the harbor, the seaward defenses of Algiers formed by a man-made breakwater. After asking Gavino to send word of the *Edwin*'s capture to one of her owners, Nathaniel Silsbee, Smith pointedly referred to his "good connexions and considerable Property" back in America, and suggested to Gavino that he might try to draft a bill on Gavino for money to effect his ransom, leaving his crew to their own resources. A month later, when Smith wrote a business contact in Malta, Edward Fettyplace, he had become hysterical at the reverse of his fortune. Without mentioning his ten-man crew, he told Fettyplace that he had been put to hard labor at the mole and his situation was "truly distressing, no distinction of persons [being made between him and his men]." He pleaded for help, telling

Fettyplace that he had more than ten thousand dollars in cash at Salem, and he could not survive six months' labor as a captive, ending, "[D]o not let me die as a slave in Algiers."

The Swedish consul at Algiers, Johan Norderling, came to Smith's rescue. By the middle of October 1812, Norderling had arranged for Smith to lodge with him at the Swedish consulate, although Norderling noted that he had to "grease the way a little" with bribes to the requisite officials. As a shipmaster and therefore a gentleman, Smith was allowed some freedom of movement and made exempt from manual labor. The ten crewmen of the *Edwin*, property of the dey, were consigned to grueling work, excavating rock from quarries by hand, carting the rocks into town to build roads and reinforce the harbor walls, and repairing forts around the city. Their food was meager, coarse black bread with a little oil or soup; they were kept at night in a long, low prison-like barracks called the bagnio, and their taskmasters were harsh and unforgiving.

The brig *Edwin* disappeared. The eleven Americans held captive, as well as a twelfth American named James Pollard, a native of Norfolk, Virginia, who was seized a few weeks later while a passenger on a neutral Spanish ship, would change history. They would not be forgotten in America. The United States government would first try to ransom them and then would declare war and dispatch its navy to rescue them. In unleashing the navy, the largest concentration of American power up to that time, to break Algiers's hold on the twelve Americans, the United States decided to put an end to the historic Islamic practice of seizing ships from Christian countries and holding their seamen and passengers as slaves for ransom. The short-lived war would feature dramatic sea battles, ruthless diplomacy, and—behind the scenes and unused—an early weapon of mass destruction.

FROM WEST TO EAST along the coast of North Africa, the four Barbary regencies stretched toward Egypt: Morocco, Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli. To the Arabs, the region was called *al-Maghreb*, meaning "the west." Nominally subject to the rule of the Ottoman sultan at Constantinople, to whom they paid annual tribute, in practice each Barbary power was governed by its own ruler—an emperor of Morocco, the dey of Algiers, the bey of Tunis, and the bashaw of Tripoli—and was treated by the rest of the world as an autonomous state. In 1815, the city of Algiers, the capital of the regency of Algiers, contained at least sixty thousand people, but perhaps more than a hundred thousand—no one really knew. The city



*Terraces d'Alger*. Lithograph by Genet from a painting by Bagot. From Adrien Berbrugger, *Algérie historique, pittoresque et monumentale* (1843), Special Collections of The Johns Hopkins University.

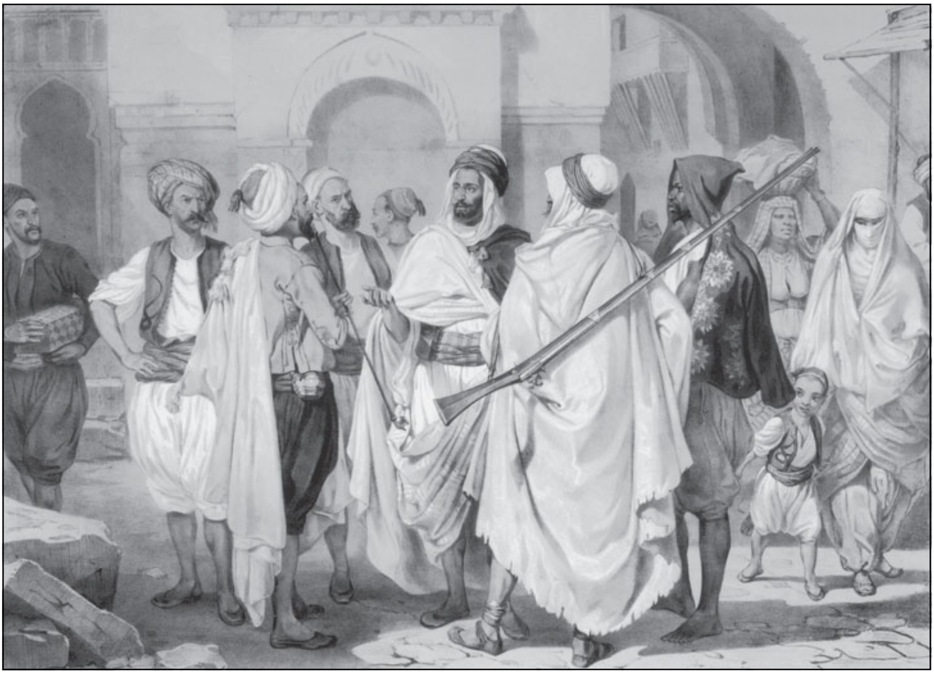
rose from the sea, a mass of whitewashed walls, low-roofed and interconnected houses, and mosques with minarets. A warren of narrow and crooked lanes crisscrossed the city. Fortifications ringed the city, and powerful batteries of heavy cannon on the harbor confronted any would-be attacker. The area around Algiers was verdant and beautiful, containing vineyards, citrus groves, orchards, and flower gardens, as well as country estates for the rich and the foreign consuls. Farms produced wheat and barley, and the coastal area contained many fruit and olive trees. The wife of the British consul to Algiers kept a diary for her six-year sojourn in Algiers, which her daughter, Elizabeth Blanckley Broughton, published with her own childhood memories, one of the few European memoirs from Barbary, and the only known recollections of a European woman. Mrs. Blanckley's diary is filled with comments about the physical beauty of Algiers. "This is indeed a land fair to look upon," she noted after seeing wildflowers growing from the side of a mountain, and for a woman who loved her native heath, there could scarcely be a more telling remark than that the fields "have now the appearance of those in England in the month of May, the inclosures being not only covered with leaves, but with blossoms as well."

In contrast to the serene countryside, political life in Algiers was violent, severe, and, at least to European eyes, unpredictable. The dey of Algiers had absolute power over his subjects as individuals but relied on the implicit support of the Turkish military elite for matters of state, and his hold on power was precarious. The dey (Turkish for "uncle") was chosen from among the elite of Turkish soldiers, or janissaries, whose ranks included young men from the fringes of Europe who renounced Christianity and embraced Islam, as well as men Barbary corsairs had stolen away as children, often ethnic Greeks and Armenians, who were trained for military life from their childhood. A dey ruled until a defeat, a badly received treaty, or a lack of money made his janissaries tire of him—creating the groundwork for a brutal coup, where the dey's guards would stab or garrote their leader and install a new dey by a vote of the divan, the council of Turkish soldiers. A dey might rule supreme for years if he was active, successful, and cunning, but always he was surrounded by a praetorian guard of Turkish soldiers. Few deys died of old age. Mrs. Blanckley noted that when the janissaries rose to depose Achmet Pasha on November 7, 1808, he tried to escape by leaping from roof terrace to roof terrace. A janissary shot him, he was thrown off the roof, and after his head was cut off in the street below, it was shown to the new dey, Ali, as proof that the previous regime was done. By the evening, as Mrs. Blanckley reported dryly, "everything was quiet, and the usual order restored." Five months later, it was Ali's turn, and he declined the poison he was offered, stating that he did not want to be an accessory to his own death. Instead, according to Mrs. Blanckley's account, he was led out "like a culprit, to the usual place of execution, where he was strangled. A distinction was, however, made in his case, as he was strangled at once, instead of undergoing the usual refinement of cruelty, in being twice revived by a glass of water, and only effectually executed the third time." Of course, a dey getting wind of such plots could strike first. Mrs. Blanckley laconically began an entry in November 1810, "Five influential men have been strangled, which, for the present, has prevented a revolution" deposing the next dey, who also took the name Ali.

Most of the people of Algiers were Arabs, farmers and shepherds outside the city, who lived in tents. City dwellers, whom Americans and Europeans often indiscriminately called "Moors," some of whom were indeed descended from the Muslims who had crossed into Spain and southwestern France before retreating back to North Africa in previous centuries, performed most of the trade and artisanal jobs. Algiers and its environs had no industry to speak of, and all clothing was either imported or sewn in the interior. In the hills lived the Berbers and Kabyles, fiercely independent tribesmen who were enemies of the Arabs. Only the Turkish janissaries had political power.

Most of the brokers and moneylenders and many of the skilled artisans of Algiers were Jews, who had an ancient and subtle relationship with the ruling Turks. Nominally, Turks, Moors, Arabs, and captive Christian slaves alike despised the Jews, who were subject to being spat upon or stoned in the streets by anyone. The Jews felt their lowly status every day. They were set apart by being forced to dress entirely in black, wear tricorn hats, and live in a ghetto; they were forbidden to carry weapons or ride horses. Yet many of the guilds—silversmiths and goldsmiths, tailors, and jewelers—were composed entirely of Jews, who owned many of the city's shops. Although many of Algiers's seven thousand Jews were poor, the wealthiest Jewish family, the Baccris, were the dey's own financiers and reputedly loaned huge sums to Napoleon. The Jewish merchants' familial and religious contacts in Gibraltar, Marseilles, Livorno, and elsewhere around the Mediterranean gave them credit, information, and insight into the outside world, which enabled them to exert enormous influence over the dey. The Jewish brokers in Algiers acted as facilitators of, and provided advances for, the ransom of slaves through their sophisticated credit and banking relationships in Europe. Yet even the most prominent Jews led a precarious existence. David Baccri was murdered by the dey on February 5, 1811, for no reason apparent to Mrs. Blanckley, and his successor as the leading Jewish figure, Durand, was beheaded that October. There was no "shadow of pretence for the poor man's massacre," according to the British consul's wife, although she supposed he was killed to assuage popular hatred of the Jews. Whenever a dey was killed, the janissaries understood they had license to sack the Jewish population, which led to the Jewish community paying large ransoms to avoid a general pillaging, and forced many Jews to seek refuge in the British consulate.

The Islamic regencies of the Maghreb had long-standing if strained ties to Christian Europe. The ruins of the ancient civilization of Carthage lay near Tunis, and a flourishing Church had produced Saint Augustine. From North Africa had come the Moors who swept through Spain, and when the Islamic expansionist tide receded, Europe grew accustomed to an Islamic presence across the Mediterranean. Though regarded as hostile to



*Types des Races Algériennes.* Lithograph by Bayot from a painting by Philippoteaux. From Adrien Berbrugger, *Algérie historique, pittoresque at monumentale* (1843), Special Collections of The Johns Hopkins University.

Christians, the Barbary regencies no longer posed a mortal threat. By the turn of the nineteenth century, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, and Morocco had become exporters of wheat, fruit, and leather for shoes to European buyers: to the merchants of Alicante, Marseilles, Barcelona, Mahon, and Livorno in times of peace, and to the British army in the Iberian peninsula during the Napoleonic Wars. But historically, the major point of contact between the Barbary regencies and Europe was slavery: corsair ships sailing out of the Maghreb seized European merchant ships and sold their crews and passengers into captivity.

For centuries, the Barbary states had run a lucrative racket of enslaving Christians. Algiers, which Mordecai Noah, later the American consul to Tunis, called "the sink of iniquity and curse of humanity," was the "great depot" of Christian slaves. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Algiers alone was said to have held thirty thousand captives—in the 1620s, more British subjects lived as slaves in Islamic North Africa than as freemen in the colonies of North America. At the height of the corsairs' activity, their audacity shocked Europe. In 1631, corsairs descended on the village of Baltimore, in Ireland, and seized the entire population, carrying them back to slavery in Algiers. Algerine corsairs raided villages as far away as Cornwall and Devon in England for men, women, and children. Of course, the coastal areas of Tuscany, Sardinia, Sicily, and the Greek isles were closer to the North African ports from which the corsairs sailed, and easier and more constant targets, since they did not have a coast guard or military force sufficient to stop or deter hit-and-run raids.

By 1800, the racket was simple and time-tested. Ships of all the mercantile nations wanted to trade throughout the Mediterranean. Barbary mariners have loosely come down through history as "pirates," but in fact the corsairs were state-owned or state-syndicated, and their practices were not outlawed under the slowly evolving notions of the law of nations. Indeed, under Islamic law, the seizures of ships from Christian countries were an article of faith, part of the jihad against nonbelievers. Armed Barbary ships darted out from a dozen ports to seize European ships and their cargoes, which, upon their return to port, Barbary courts condemned as lawful prizes, with the result that the European seamen and passengers carried back to Algiers, Tunis, or Tripoli, were enslaved.

White slavery on the Barbary coast was essentially a system of regulated commercial kidnapping, the Christians seized from Europe or America in the first instance with the notion of being trading back for cash. In fact,