

Ch. 10 Gordon's Odyssey

"We returned from Alexandria without losing a single vessel"

~~1812-1814~~ Captain James Gordon to Vice Admiral Alexander (Cochrane; Letters Received, September 9, 1814.)

1812 1786565

DOUBLE COLUMN PROLOGUE

with illustrations

PROLOGUE

Double Column Text

James Gordon was born in 1782 to a family of minor gentry (with limited means), living in Aberdeen, Scotland. At the age of eleven, his wealthy aunt, Lady Glenbervie, recommended him for an appointment as Volunteer 1st Class on board the newly commissioned ^{3rd rate} H.M.S. ARROGANT, 74, Captain James Whitshed. Gordon and ten other recruits were housed temporarily in a hulk anchored next to ARROGANT which was serving to accommodate workmen fitting out the ship. James immediately fell in with the other boys, spending nights harpooning rats and pilfering items that the workmen left aboard the hulk. However, he was not greatly interested in selling the loot, commenting throughout his life that "he never cared for money, never had any, and never wanted it." Unfortunately he ^{still} could not read since ARROGANT'S harsh tutor, failed to teach the wild boy how, and James himself was disinterested in learning how. (Perrett; 19, 22-25),

After ARROGANT'S shakedown cruise, the ship joined the Channel Fleet, and in May 1794, it was ordered to duty with five other 74's, escorting convoys to Newfoundland and the East and West Indies. During an extended leave period when the ship was to be held in ordinary, Whitshed reassigned Gordon to the frigate GOLIAETH, commanded by his personal friend Thomas Foley, who was able to provide Gordon with a more considerate schoolmaster, Mr. Strachan, and in a matter of weeks James learned to read to the required standard for midshipmen. However, after Captain Whitshed returned to Spithead in 1795, he was ordered to ready ARROGANT for service in the East India Squadron, which he felt was a backwater service, and he decided to transfer James to 6th rate EURYDICE, ²⁴ commanded by another of his personal friends, Captain Francis Cole. Gordon commented, "[I] was happy