(Philadelphia), VII, no. 39, pp. 201-215

ANALECTIC MAGAZINE,

AND

NAVAL CHRONICLE.

MARCH, 1816.

CHRONICLE.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF

CAPTAIN THOMAS MACDONOUGH.

The writers of biography in legitimate monarchies possess great advantages over those of a simple republic, where a man must depend on his own merits rather than those of his ancestors, for public admiration. In writing, for instance, the life of a noble lord, who never in his life did any thing worth recording, the true legitimate biographer slily resorts to the noble lord's ancestors, their exploits, intermarriages, and other important events in the family history. By these means, aided by the legends of the herald's office, he compiles a very interesting memoir, at least of the noble lord's ancestors, to whose exploits he is fully entitled by the theory as well as the practice of hereditary succession. For if it should happen (as certainly it may possibly happen) that folly or knavery should succeed to the distinctions originally bestowed on genius and virtue, it can only be justified by means of some mysterious extension of birthright, by which the great-great-grandson becomes a party in exploits that happened long before he was born.

By this theory the true legitimate biographer obtains an undoubted right to decorate his titled hero with as many of those achievements as he can conveniently carry; and thus it happens in legitimate governments, that family honours are accumulating by a sort of compound interest, notwithstanding the degeneracy of the means, somewhat in the same way that the riches of some countries are said to increase with the amount of their debts and expenditures. This accumulation of family honours, which, like the rust on an old coin, increases with years, and furnishes unequivocal proof of antiquity, makes it worth a man's while to perform great actions, since he thereby not only ennobles himself and his wife, but all the rogues and blockheads of his posterity forever and ever. The temptation to perform great actions is thus inconceivably heightened, and it is without doubt owing to this accelerating motive, that the achievements of men in legitimate governments are so much more prodigious than in simple republics, where all that a man can expect for his highest exertions in the cause of his country, is honours that are exclusively paid to his own merit, together with the admiration of his cotemporaries, and the vener-

ation of their posterity. The highest reward the Roman republic ever paid to her most illustrious warriors, was a ride through the streets of Rome in a chariot drawn by four white horses, together with a laurel crown, that might be worth about one penny. The natural result of all this was, that none of the Roman heroes, of whom we read so much, ever performed an action that can be put in competition with the burning of the capitol at Washington, for which the renowned perpetrator was ennobled, together with all his posterity.

Unhappily for this country, and still more unhappily for the writers of biograpghy, few of us can trace our ancestry higher than Adam. And we can do this only by the aid of the authority of scripture, which wont do in the college of heralds. Family trees are exceedingly scarce; and those, in truth, are rather barren, containing at most not more than three or four generations. Our ancestors unluckily forgot their pedigrees, having other matters to attend to, or perhaps being in too great a hurry to think of such trifles. We cannot trace back to those glorious times when a man was ennobled for killing a fleet deer, or immortalized, like young Lochinvar, for owning a swift horse, and running away with a lady, as if that was any great matter. Not one of our ancestors, that we know of, came over with William the bastard to conquer England; nor can any of us claim an unquestionable affinity to a single name in the roll of Battle Abbey, about which the English antiquarians wrote so many huge dissertations. We are consequently obliged to build up a name for ourselves, as the first settlers of this country were obliged to build houses, because they found none ready built for them when they arrived; and instead of boasting lustily of our ancestors, are reduced to the unpleasant necessity of leaving it for posterity to boast of us, if they should be so inclined. It is believed, that with the exception of a few of the indubitable Dutch patriarchs of New York, whose ancestors must have flourished before the invention of history, since nobody can tell any thing about them--a few families claiming a descent from the aborigines of this country--and a few that have ennobled themselves, by purchasing a pedigree and coat of arms at the herald's office in England, that this undignified republic cannot boast of a single man the merits of whose ancestors can make amends for his own want of merit.

Happily for us, however, the subject of our present notice, although most respectably descended, does not require the assistance of any documents from the herald's office, nor to intrench himself under magni nominis umbra. We will therefore proceed to a detail of the prominent incidents of his life, which have gained him the notice of the world and the gratitude of his countrymen.

Thomas Macdonough, the father of captain Thomas Macdonough, was an eminent physician, who resided at a farm called The Trapp, in the county of New Castle, Delaware. In the year 1775 he entered the army, and was appointed a major in a regiment raised by the state of Delaware, of which Mr. John Haslett was colonel, and the late Gunning Bedford lieutenant-colonel. Major Macdonough, from what cause is not known, retired early from the army, and re-

Analectic Magazine and Naval Chronicle (Philadelphia), VII, No.39, March, 1816, p. 224.

ANECDOTE OF THE ACTION ON LAKE CHAMPLAIN

Immediately after the action on Lake Champlain commenced, a game cock on board commodore Macdonough's ship flew up the fore hatchway, and lighted on the ship's bell, where he crowed with all his might, till the bell was struck by a shot, and knocked to pieces. He then flew up into the rigging, and continued crowing till the action ceased. Many of the seamen considered the circumstance as a favourable omen.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE TO CAPTAIN MACDONOUGH'S LIFE

Page 208.-On some occasion which occurred at Syracuse.- This occasion, we are told, was as follows: While the American fleet lay at Messina, Macdonough was detained one night on shore till all the ships' boats had returned to the fleet. He then hired a boat to take him on board; but finding three instead of two men (the usual complement) going in it, he suspected them of some evil design, and refused to go; whereupon they drew their poniards and attacked him in the manner related.

Analectic Magazine and Naval Chronicle (Philadelphia), VII, No. 40, April, 1816, pp. 333-367.

For The Analectic Magazine

BIOGRAPHICAL MEMOIR OF THE HONOURABLE JAMES A. BAYARD

The loss of public benefactors is always a national calamity. But there is a period of life when, having performed their allotted task, they stand upon the verge of time, and are ready to sink into the grave, full of years and full of honours. The separation which a grateful country mourns, is deprived of half its sorrows by the reflection that their days of activity were gone. Age which threatens to dissolve the union that has been cemented by mutual benefits and affection, bears with it, in the course of nature, infirmities that impair the ability and restrain the enterprise of man. Living, he is but a monument of former worth; and the grave, which encloses his enervated body, leaves his bright example to excite the imitation, and his unsullied name to receive the respect of after ages. Public affliction seeks in vain for consolation when its object has been arrested in the midst of his career of usefulness: when schemes of national advancement, but partially matured, must be buried with their inventor: when the seeds of public aggrandizement have been profusely scattered, but the harvest remains ungathered: when the course already run--bright and honourable as it has been, is but the moiety of what was destined for its daring efforts: and when, having passed the temptations of early life, and overcome its instability, it yet was far distant from the feebleness of years; and standing at the happy and enviable medium between youth and age, it united daring, ardent, and adventurous enterprise, with the wariest prudence and most calculating philosophy. Private lamentation is but the echo of national sorrow, and the bosoms that throb for the loss of a parent and a friend, sympathize with the distresses and beat in unison with the hearts of a whole people.

In the meridian of life, died James A. Bayard. A great man's best eulogium is the history of his actions; and a rapid view of the features of his public conduct, and the occasions upon which he was chiefly conspicuous, will serve to recall events that endeared him to his country, and to perpetuate in the nation's memory a consciousness of the magnitude of its loss.

Mr. Bayard was the son of Dr. James A. Bayard, and was born in Philadelphia, in the year 1767. His parents dying while he was yet a child, he was placed under the guardianship of his uncle, the late colonel John Bayard, of whose family he became a member, and with whom he continued to reside for several years. His education was submitted to the care of the reverend Mr. Smith, a most respectable clergyman of Picqua, in Lancaster county; and after remaining with him a considerable time, he resumed his studies in his uncle's family with the assistance of a private tutor. There he continued until he was qualified