



# Life of Frederick Marryat

*David Hannay*

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Marryat's time aboard the *Imperieuse* included action off the Gironde, the rescue of a fellow midshipman who had fallen overboard, captures of many ships off the Mediterranean coast of Spain, and the capture of the castle of Montgat. The *Imperieuse* shifted to operations in the Scheldt in 1809, where Marryat contracted malaria; he returned to England on the 74-gun HMS *Victorious*. After recuperating, Marryat returned to the Mediterranean in the 74-gun HMS *Centaur* and again saved a shipmate by leaping into the sea after him. He then sailed as a passenger to Bermuda in the 64-gun HMS *Atlas*, and from there to Halifax, Nova Scotia on the schooner HMS *Chubb*, where he joined the 32-gun frigate HMS *Aeolus* on 27 April 1811. A few months later, Marryat again earned distinction by leading the effort to cut away the *Aeolus*'s mainyard to save the ship during a storm and, continuing a pattern, he also saved one of the men from the sea. Shortly thereafter, he moved to the frigate HMS *Spartan*, participating in the capture of a number of American ships (the War of 1812 having begun). On 26 December 1812, he was promoted to lieutenant, and as such served in the sloop HMS *Espiegle* and in HMS *Newcastle*. Marryat led four barges from the latter ship on a punishing raid to Orleans, Massachusetts on December 19, 1814, the last combat in New England during the war. The affair had mixed results. Initially, Marryat cut out an American schooner and three sloops, but managed to escape with just one sloop. The local militia avoided casualties while killing one Royal marine. He was promoted to commander on 13 June 1815, just as peace broke out. Marryat then turned to scientific studies. He invented a lifeboat, which earned him a gold medal from the Royal Humane Society and the nickname "Lifeboat". Based on his experience in the Napoleonic Wars escorting merchant ships in convoys, he developed a practical, widely used system of maritime flag signalling known as Marryat's Code. During his scientific studies in 1818, he described a new gastropod genus *Cyclostrema* with the type species *Cyclostrema cancellatum* Marryat, 1818.

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