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## **NEW LIGHT UPON THE CAREER OF JOHN PAUL JONES**

Extract from the above letter written by Janette Taylor (John Paul Jones's niece), from New York on 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1843, to the American author James Fenimore Cooper, commenting on A S MacKenzie's "Life of Paul Jones," 1841.

"That Capt Mackenzie should be ignorant of the character of Mr Craik of Arbigland and other eminent men of Great Britain is not wonderful, but he ought not to put down his own conjectures for facts. William Craik of Arbigland was a man still more distinguished by his scientific and literary acquirements than by his splendid fortune and position in society, he was in correspondence with all the eminent men of his day, and was "**known to fame**" before Paul Jones knew existence – It seems to be a fact but little known, in this country, that Dr James Craik the Physician, legatee, compatriot, and friend of General Washington was an illegitimate son of Mr Craik of Arbigland, he offended his father by adopting the cause of the colonies, and they never after had any direct communication, but the Doctor kept up, till his death, a correspondence with his half sister, Miss Helen Craik, a lady who inherited the splendid talents of his father, who was a warm friend to myself from my childhood, I may say from my infancy, 'till her death.

I shall not go over what Capt Mackenzie has said regarding the descent on Whitehaven – Paul Jones had no **mother, sister or relation of any denomination** at the time, in either Whitehoven or its neighborhood, or even in England. If he can be justified in taking up arms at all on behalf of the revolted colonies he may also be justified for his descent on Whitehoven, if he cannot be the former I ask what apology is to be offered for the signers of the Declaration of Independence, who are **Englishmen, Scotsmen, Irishmen and Welchmen** by birth?

Note page 68 Col 2d – This sword (the sword presented by Louis XVI to Paul Jones) was sent by Jones's heirs to his valued friend Robt Morris" – "Mr Morris gave this sword to the navy of the United States. It was to be retained and worn by the senior officer, and transmitted on his death to his successor."

As a great deal of misrepresentation has been spread abroad regarding the disposal of this sword, I think it is right to state the simple facts –

At the time Paul Jones sent the late Mr William Taylor, my brother, the latin inscription for a translation, he said it was the inscription on the blade of a sword **that might one day be his**, this nephew is the person alluded to in his Journal of the Campaign of the Liman, when after noticing his having been accused of killing his nephew in the American war, he says "I never had a nephew or any other relation, under my command. Happily these facts are known in America. I have one dear nephew, who is still too young for service, but who now pursues his studies. Since I came to Rupia I have intended him

for the imperial marine. Instead of imbruing my hands in his blood, **he will be cherished as my Son.**”

Had Paul Jones been able to dictate the terms of his own settlement, there is no room for doubt that the sword would have been bequeathed to Mr Taylor, who was the only son of his eldest and favourite sister and himself one of whom his uncle had always expressed particular regard, and who had never offended him. Had the mind of Paul Jones been in its wonted vigour it is not at all probable he would have left an article of such value (for independent of the honor conferred, it cost the King of France 500 Louis d’or) and which could not be divided, as the common property of ten co-heirs seven of whom were females. It seems that it was his intention and wish to divide his fortune equally between his two sisters. The original will shows this to have been the case, in the first page of which the words “**one half**” having been drawn through with a pen, but he was persuaded by those around him to divide his property into as many equal portions as there were individuals in the two families, as being more republican, of this fact Colonel Beaupoil and Blackden, tow of the witnesses and advisers, have given my Mother a certificate.

He was found dead only half an hour after his settlement had been signed, and his signature is scarcely legible.

The other effects in the possession of Paul Jones at the time of his death were sold in Paris but the sword was carried to Scotland, where, as might have been expected, it became a bone of contention. The eldest niece of Paul Jones who was married to a Mr Williamson, wrote to my mother that her husband was going to set off that evening for America, and as he purposed carrying along with him the sword given by the King of France to Paul Jones, if the children (meaning my brother and myself) wished to see it they might come to her house. How the simpleton could imagine that her husband would be allowed to carry off a valuable property of which she owned only a tenth part, I know not, but such was the fact. My mother had Mr Williamson publicly arrested as he was entering the coach to depart, thereby ending his excursion to America. The sword was taken to my father’s house – after various, and I may add ridiculous, projects for its disposal, that of giving it to Mr Morris was decided on – my brother and myself were too young to be consulted, our property was given away without our concurrence, and I believe, without that of some of their heirs who were minors. Had it been given to the United States or to the Navy, or even to some other public body I would have felt less regret and less ashamed of the folly of those connected with me. Mr Morris in his letter acknowledging the receipt of the sword tells the donors, that, in consequence of his being a civilian and not entitled to wear it himself, he had **given** it to a naval officer. My brother on his arrival in America was informed that Mr Morris, whose affairs were then in a state of great embarrassment, had not given the sword to the Navy, the nation, or to anybody, but had **sold** it to an officer who had been one of my Uncle’s greatest enemies.

A naval officer wrote me on the authority of a Philadelphia paper, that Captain Dale had appeared on the occasion of the launch of the Sloop of War Dale,

decorated with the gold hilted sword given by the King of France to Paul Jones, and which the latter had given to Commodore Dale, his father. How Capt Dale came to be deckt like the Daw, with borrowed feathers, is for him to say. I cannot believe he would disgrace the name of an officer and a gentleman by asserting a falsehood, but when such an erroneous statement appeared publicly he ought to have contradicted it. The sword which I presume he purchased can reflect no honor on him, although his mother told me that the whole merit resulting from the capture of the Serapis belonged to her husband, he being the first man who boarded her; I did not think fit to argue the matter, I merely remarked that Commodore Dale in the statement drawn up by himself, or under his authority arrogates to himself no such merit.

Had my nephew survived the sword would have been purchased for him, if money could have brought it – and the gentleman, who by the death of my brother and my nephew, has become the male representative of Paul Jones is extremely anxious to have it restored to the family and will give Capt Dale much more than he paid for it, for that purpose.

Speaking of the Sloop of War Dale calls to my recollection a circumstance connected with the name of my uncle. It seems that his subordinates have got vessels of war of some kind or other named after them, while the founder of their navy, the man whose name has been entered in their public records as having “**made the flag of America respectable among the flags of other nations,**” has been even worse than overlooked and neglected. In July 1834 when the Honorable Campbell P White returned to New York from Washington, where he had been chairman of the Committee on Naval affairs in the House of Repts. He told me that to gratify me, he had been instrumental in procuring an appropriation for building a first class frigate to be called the **Paul Jones**. I assured him I was highly gratified and at various times afterwards made enquiries after the said frigate both here and in Washington without being able to obtain any tidings of her. In the beginning of 1840 I observed a paragraph in a New York paper saying, that, the keel of a first class frigate, to be called the Paul Jones, which should have been laid at this time at the Wallabout, has been postponed, on account of the scarcity of seamen. The editor adds “Can an appropriation voted for one purpose to be applied to another? “We say No” but there was a circumstance connected with the affair the editor seems not to have been aware of. The following is the bill authorising the building of the Ship Paul Jones. “Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled.

“That the Secretary of the Navy be, and he is hereby, authorised to direct the procurement, in the usual mode, of a live oak frame for a frigate to be called the Paul Jones, and a live oak frame for a sloop of war to be called the Levant; and the sum of 50,000 dollars is hereby appropriated, out of any money in the treasury not otherwise appropriated, for that purpose.

“Approved, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 1834”.

On the last day of this same session another bill was passed – a bill authorising the President to alter the destination of any **naval** appropriation

made that session, which bill was doubtless introduced for the special purpose of applying the appropriation made for the ship, Paul Jones, to some other purpose, what that has been I have never been able to ascertain.

General Washington, in his letter of 3<sup>rd</sup> June, 1783, to General Putnam after lamenting that General P had to complain of the ungrateful returns of his country, says “Ingratitude has been experienced in all ages, and **Republics in particular have ever been famed for the exercise of that unnatural and sordid vice.**” and verily the United States seem in no wise disposed to prove themselves an exception to the general rule.

But to return to Captain Mackenzie’s book. Page 226, 2s vol.

It is quite evident that the evil opinion of others did not have the effect of sinking our hero in his own. He was an enthusiast in his own favour.”

There can exist no just cause why the evil opinion of others should sink a man in his own, so long as he is conscious that it is not merited. To know our own worth, is not to be vain of it, and some people’s **censure** is no **slight praise**.

246. “Paul Jones was not particular as to the banner under which he served. The cause was to him of inferior importance to the opportunity of winning glory.”

“When he had once brought himself to fight against his own country in defence of freedom and universal philanthropy he could easily have persuaded himself, if necessary, that the cause of the Empress against the Turks was a pious Christian one. And so with regard to Sweden against Russia.”

When Paul Jones drew his sword on behalf of Great Britain’s revolved colonies, they had **no navy**, and **no name among the nations**, could neither **pay** nor **protect** him. At a time when Franklin had been denounced in the British Parliament as a “**hoary headed traitor**” and Washington would have been hung and quartered, had he been caught, Paul Jones had a much brighter prospect of winning the **Gallows**, than of “**winning glory**”.

Throughout the whole book Mr Mackenzie speaks as if the North American colonies had not constituted a portion of the British Empire, and consequently, that their sons were even at that period independent.

We cannot choose a country for ourselves, or select that spot on earth on which we are to draw our first breath, but in most instances a control over our personal acts and deeds is put into our own hands.

General Washington was not only a born British subject, had carried arms in the service of the King of England, but had, moreover, **personally** and **voluntarily** pledged his allegiance to the crown, in as **strong** and **solemn** an **oath** as could be put to man.”