

Midshipman Pardon Whipple

A young gentlemen at sea

I am a midshipman on the *Constitution*, and my name is Pardon Mawney Whipple. I am 22 years of age, and come from one of the most respected families in Rhode Island. This may have helped me win my post, but I like to believe that ability also played a part. Joining *Constitution's* crew is an honor, but I will not be content until we engage the enemy. For there is no greater glory than sacrificing everything for one's country.



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I have no duties

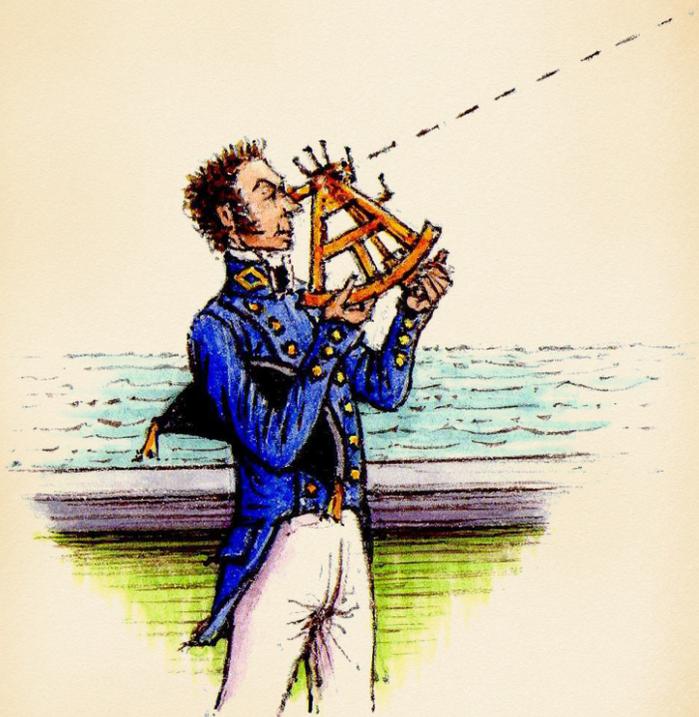
Navy regulations state that “no particular duties can be assigned” to midshipmen, but this suggests we lead a life of leisure. If only it were so! We each keep a journal; we stand watches with our senior officers; and we command the men at work and at gun exercises. If we capture a ship, we shall compete to be prize captain of it.



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I am a lieutenant in training

When we midshipmen are not working, we spend our time studying. The sailing master teaches us navigation, and the other skills we need as commissioned officers. These classes are no more difficult than my studies on land, yet because they deal with the sea, they are different in every way. I apply to them all the energy I can muster, for only by doing so will I succeed in the career I have chosen.



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The true nature of battle

After our victory over *Levant* I was in charge of removing prisoners from the ship. This macabre task brought home to me the awfulness of war, and showed me the horror that hides behind its glory and valor. Dead and wounded covered the whole deck, but there was worse on the mizzen mast. For several feet it was splattered with brains, blood, teeth and pieces of bone, blown there by our gun-fire.



Courtesy Historical Maritime Society

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What happened to me?

I stayed with *Constitution* until war ended, and eventually gained the commission I had so keenly hoped for. Serving in the Mediterranean in 1821 I rescued ten sailors from storm-toss'd boats. Though this brought me praise, it was rash because – perhaps as a result – I contracted the Wasting Disease, which ended my career. I fear it may also end me, so I have written a will bequeathing to my sweetheart Eliza my French books, and my shell and mineral collection.



Pardon Whipple's worst fears were confirmed when he died from tuberculosis in 1827.