

off Valcour Island helped turn the overall tide of the Revolutionary War. One cannot read this book without thinking that Benedict Arnold's later acts of treason were a tragic ending for a man who, otherwise, would have been an American military hero.

Historian Kelly is a master storyteller, incorporating beguiling details and background information to bring to life the events and historic characters along with the bit-players who did all the fighting and bleeding. While retaining a scholarly thrust, the author occasionally uses textured prose to create remarkable and compelling word-images. For example: "The sun reached its zenith in the cobalt sky. While cumulus clouds, excited by the drama below went flying by. The guns gushed tumbling white clouds themselves, the sulfurous smoke billowing in the wind" (169).

Two more multifaceted gems are, "That night they got a taste of the adversity that always threaten sailors. The clouds first masked, then devoured the newly full moon. The air became restless. Drops of rain splattered on the canopies rigged over the gondolas' decks. The drumroll increased to a fierce tattoo. The wind veered around the north. It whipped the rain under the awnings, giving the men on the decks a cold drenching. The pitching and heaving of the boats under their anchor cables had many of them vomiting over the gunwales. The night went on and on" (98). "And if the days were hard, what are the nights? The moon, which had passed full a few days after they arrived at Valcour, had given relief from the profound darkness. But even bathed in that ghostly light, the nearby forests and hills suggested the darkness of the spirit. The men had to fight against gloom and discouragement. Now that the moon was coming toward new, the darkness deepened, feeding the men's worst imaginings" (128-129).

I highly recommend *Valcour* to historians and lay readers alike, a gem of maritime history chronicling a brief but pivotal event. In closing, Kelly perceptively summarizes his work's overall message as follows: "Generals and politicians have basked in renown. Ordinary fighting men and innocent civilians have carried the burden. The idea of war can inspire glory – its reality is anguish, hardship, and loss" (250).

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Alston Kennerley. *Bullen's Voyages. The Life of Frank T Bullen: Sailor, Whaler, Author.* Barnsley, S. Yorks: Seaforth Publications, www.pen-and-sword.co.uk, 2022. 256 pp., illustrations, maps, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. UK £25.00, cloth; ISBN 978-1-39907-427-8.

To refer to Frank T. Bullen as one of, if not the most, prolific writers on merchant sailors and the experiences of life at sea very easily could be said to be an understatement. Having written more than thirty books and innumerable articles, Bullen rose to prominence in the early-twentieth century as a lecturer and storyteller. Yet today, he has mainly become a footnote. Even more surprising is the seeming lack of interest in exploring the life of a man who, even if exaggerated, experienced more than dozens of other men of his era at a time when his writings were still fresh. Seeking to correct this long-standing oversight, Alston Kennerley draws together the story presented through Bullen's writings, backed with British maritime records, to create a single-volume biography. Starting with Bullen's rough, largely parentless childhood, we see how lack of opportunity and support on land pushed him to enlist on his first sailing voyage at the age of twelve, under the command of his ill-tempered uncle George. Here Bullen obtained a traditionally rough introduction to what it meant to be a sailor. Far from being eased into his new duties at sea, he was expected to learn on the job and quickly, with a threat of verbal or physical punishment at the hands of his openly abusive uncle, now captain, on open display. Nor was he afforded much in the way of ongoing support from the rest of the crew, particularly after an earlier mishap where a young Frank spoke too openly to a family while ashore, and the concerned father questioned his uncle as to the boy's treatment.

All the same, Bullen seems to have quickly taken to the sailing life, ready to advance his skills and career by moving from ship to ship as circumstances dictated for several years. He was also clearly aware of the issues of immorality that could arise on board ships, however, as his writings came to reflect a profoundly moralizing force, seemingly at odds with the frequent realities of life at sea. While this may have been a product of later life experiences once he was done sailing, Kennerley's narrative indicates that this view was at least partially present while he was still directly involved in the industry. In this assessment lies the most significant potential issue with this book: how much of Bullen appears in his writings. While the dates and types of his voyages can be confirmed through British maritime records, the true Bullen is not so readily found. Well aware of the desires of the reading public, and being a veteran sailor himself, it would not be surprising if Bullen embellished his stories to some degree, if only for the added drama. Thus, any biography seeking to consolidate the man's life story necessarily has to be careful to parse out the genuine from the enhanced reality of the story, but also to not reject the wilder truths. In navigating the need to take whatever Bullen has written with an appropriate grain of salt, Kennerley has well and truly stepped up. While we may never fully know the man whose adventures at sea were vast enough to produce the fodder for thirty books and numerous articles, the author manages

a well-aimed stab that generally hits the mark.

Those of a more academic leaning will undoubtedly appreciate the multiple detailed lists the author provides, including information on the various ships and voyages that Bullen served in throughout his career. Kennerley's detailed tracing of Bullen's movements back and forth across the world's oceans, makes it easy to see exactly why and how he came to be so genuinely sympathetic to the trials and tribulations of the common sailor. Moreover, in the absence of a biography of Bullen, Kennerley has opened up new avenues for research into the life and times of the man himself, particularly surrounding his youth that the author himself was unable to answer, nor which were the core concern of this biography. While only time will tell the true fruitfulness of such an inquiry, it would not at all be surprising for a future reader of this book to be inspired to seek to answer the lingering questions about the circumstances that forced a young Frank Bullen to sea, and what held him there until he found himself inextricably bound to it in one fashion or another for the rest of his life.

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John G. Langley, Q.C. *Canadian Confederate Cruiser: The Story of the Steamer Queen Victoria*. Halifax, N.S.: Nimbus Publishing Limited, www.nimbus.ca, 2018. 191 pp., illustrations, appendices, notes, bibliography, index. CDN \$17.95, paper; ISBN 978-1-77108-660-8.

The life, death, and lasting legacy of SS *Queen Victoria* is a tale well worth the telling, and John Langley, of Baddeck, Nova Scotia, tells it well. He shines a bright light on this hitherto little known, and sadly, unsung aspect of Canadian history.

The SS *Queen Victoria* and its twin sister ship, SS *Napoleon III*, were commissioned by Francois Baby, a Quebec City ship owner, and built by Robert Napier and Sons at Govan on the River Clyde. The two astutely named vessels joined the Baby fleet in 1856. Of advanced design and powered by both steam and sail, the two assumed such routine but essential duties as supplying lighthouses, delivering mail, tending navigational buoys, and providing tugging service. It was *Victoria*, however, that was plucked, Cinderella-like, from this mundane existence and given a task that placed her at the heart of the political processes resulting in Confederation.

The life of the SS *Queen Victoria* was not entirely humdrum, however, and Langley describes in considerable detail its occasional role in carrying such dignitaries as two successive governors general and their entourages and, in 1860, the young Prince of Wales, later to be King Edward VII, during his