

The first person surnamed Swartwout to enter the naval service of the United States, it seems, was Thomas, the fourth son of Colonel Barnardus and Mary Brower Swartwout. On May 28, 1800, when fifteen years old, he was appointed by President John Adams a midshipman and assigned to the *New York*,<sup>1</sup> Captain Robertson, carrying thirty-six guns. From that vessel he was transferred to the frigate *Essex*, of thirty-two guns, Captain William Bainbridge, commandant.

The secretary of the navy, having, on the twentieth of May, 1801, ordered the frigates *President*, Commodore Richard Dale, *Philadelphia*, Captain Samuel Barron, *Essex*, Captain William Bainbridge, and the schooner *Enterprise*, Lieutenant-Commandant Andrew Sterrett, to be prepared for sea, Captain Bainbridge immediately proceeded to New York city to superintend the equipment of the *Essex*. As soon as the squadron was ready for sea-service, it sailed from Hampton Roads for the Mediterranean, where it was sent to protect the merchant vessels of the United States against the cruisers of the bashaw of Tripoli. On the arrival of the squadron in the Mediterranean, Captain Bainbridge, by the order of Commodore Dale, cruised off the ports of Algiers, Tunis, and Tripoli, and during the winter and spring of 1802 convoyed the United States merchantmen across the sea in safety to their various destinations.

Unhappily for Midshipman Swartwout a personal difference between him and James S. Higinbotham, also a midshipman on board the *Essex*, led to a duel, and he was killed by his opponent.

The unseaworthiness of the *Essex* caused Captain Bainbridge to be ordered to return to the United States with the frigate, and he arrived at the port of New York on the twenty-second of July, 1802.

In a letter of inquiry, dated "New York, July 24, 1802," addressed to Captain Bainbridge, Colonel Swartwout wrote :

"Being the father of that very unfortunate young man, Mr. Thomas Swartwout, late a midshipman under your orders, who, while engaged in an honorable pursuit—that of serving his country—fell a victim to the (false) laws of honor to the great affliction of his relatives, \* \* \* \* I therefore take the liberty, sir, to ask the favor that you will direct the purser to exhibit his account with the deceased, and to pay me whatever may be due, or to instruct me where to apply for it."

The sympathetic officer at once answered with the following communication :

"New York, 25 July, 1802.

"Sir:—I have received your letter respecting the wages of your unfortu-

<sup>1</sup> By a law passed by Congress, approved March 3, 1801, the president was authorized to place the navy on a peace-footing, by retaining for service the thirteen frigates, *United States*, *Constitution*, *President*, *Chesapeake*, *Philadelphia*, *Constellation*, *Congress*, *New York*, *Boston*, *Essex*, *Adams*, *John Adams*, and *General Greene*.