



Cochrane: The Life and Exploits of a Fighting Captain

Robert Harvey

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A seaman as heroic as Nelson, a master of gunnery and genius at deception, a tactician so formidably skillful Napoleon called him "the sea wolf," Thomas Cochrane made of his life a legend more sensational than any of the works of fiction it inspired—like the tales of C. S. Forrester and Patrick O'Brian's best-selling series of naval novels featuring the redoubtable Jack Aubrey. Barely twenty-five in 1800 when he assumed command of the tiny brig *Speedy*, Cochrane sailed to naval glory in the Mediterranean and won national fame at home. A maverick, he preferred innovation to the orders of the Admiralty. He flew under false colors, instituted in-shore guerrilla raiding, promoted the use of explosion ships, and experimented with poison gas. As a mercenary, he fought in the cause of independence for Chile, Peru, and Brazil, where, outnumbered and outgunned, he triumphed over Spanish and Portuguese naval forces. He also survived a Stock Exchange scandal that landed him in prison. Rebellious, dashing, mad, heroic, Cochrane epitomized the spirit of the Romantic Age he embodied.

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