



Letter of Marque

BY MICHAEL AYE

Boson Books, US Trade Paperback, \$20.99 /

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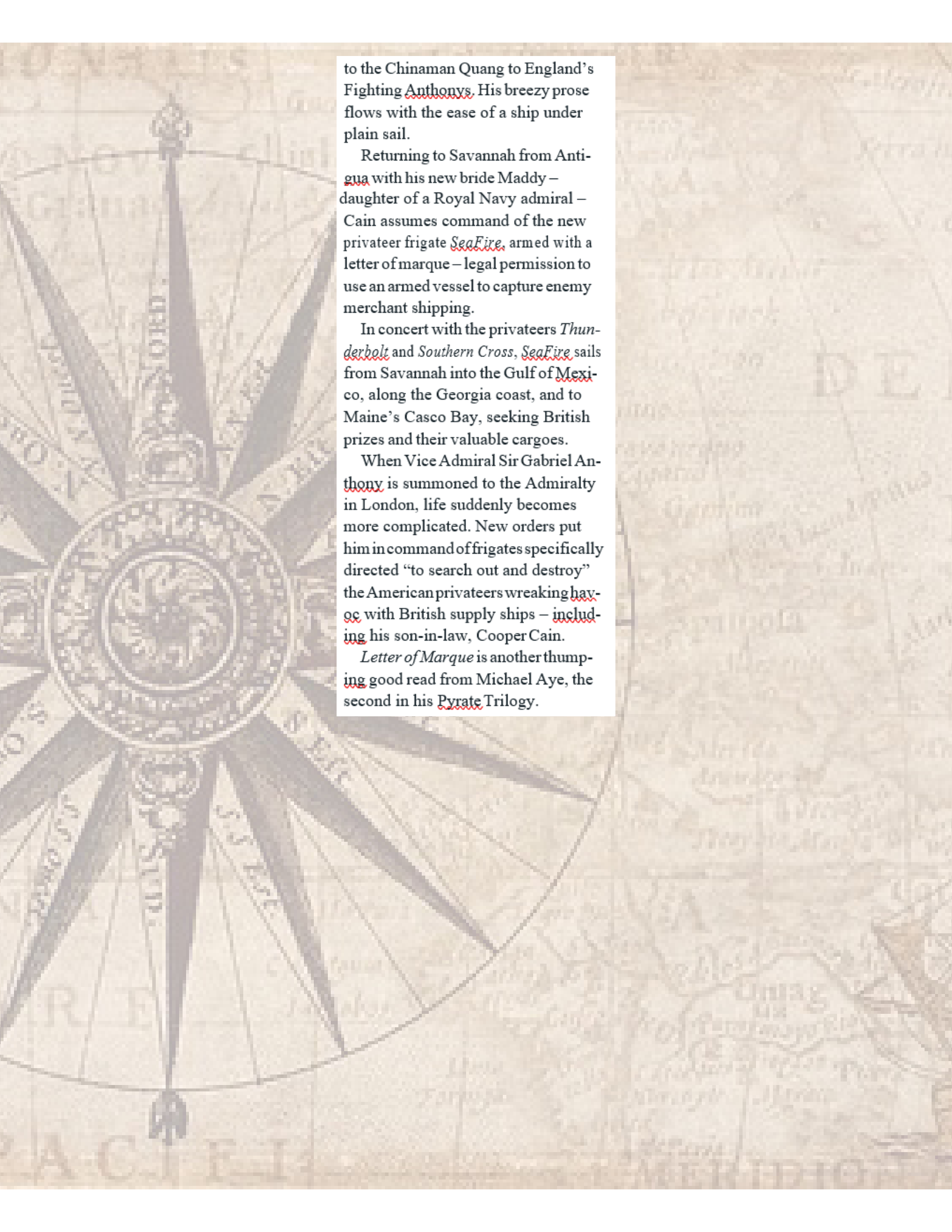
Conflict between the United States and the United Kingdom on the high seas touched off the War of 1812 or “the war for sailor’s rights.”

The Napoleonic Wars, which flared up in 1803, severely taxed the British Royal Navy, whose inshore squadrons blockaded French ports and constantly sought men to fill out their crews.

One unpopular answer was to impress American merchant sailors, a practice that eventually led President James Madison to declare of war against Great Britain on 18 June 1812.

In *Letter of Marque*, Georgia-based novelist Michael Aye wades into the clash, which often pitted brother against brother. Cooper Cain, the former pirate, is caught between America, his adopted country, and his ties to his native England.

Aye is at his best telling stories through striking characters, from the young one-time brigand Cooper Cain



to the Chinaman Quang to England's Fighting *Anthony's*. His breezy prose flows with the ease of a ship under plain sail.

Returning to Savannah from Antigua with his new bride Maddy – daughter of a Royal Navy admiral – Cain assumes command of the new privateer frigate *SeaFire*, armed with a letter of marque – legal permission to use an armed vessel to capture enemy merchant shipping.

In concert with the privateers *Thunderbolt* and *Southern Cross*, *SeaFire* sails from Savannah into the Gulf of Mexico, along the Georgia coast, and to Maine's Casco Bay, seeking British prizes and their valuable cargoes.

When Vice Admiral Sir Gabriel Anthony is summoned to the Admiralty in London, life suddenly becomes more complicated. New orders put him in command of frigates specifically directed “to search out and destroy” the American privateers wreaking havoc with British supply ships – including his son-in-law, Cooper Cain.

Letter of Marque is another thumping good read from Michael Aye, the second in his *Pyrate Trilogy*.