



Admiral de Grasse and American Independence

Charles Lee Lewis

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The average American knows little or nothing of the great service rendered by Admiral de Grasse, a French admiral, to the cause of American independence in the battle off Cape Henry in 1781. The battle off Cape Henry had ultimate effects more important than those of Waterloo. De Grasse's action entailed upon the British the final loss of the thirteen colonies in America. This biography by Charles Lee Lewis places this supremely important naval battle off the Virginia Capes in its proper historical perspective, and gives de Grasse the full credit for rendering the aid which made possible the capture of Cornwallis at Yorktown. Washington fully recognized this aid, when he wrote to de Grasse following the surrender of Cornwallis and expressed his gratitude "in the name of America for the glorious event for which she is indebted to you." Without de Grasse's victory all the military efforts on land made by Rochambeau, Lafayette, and Washington would have been in vain. The battle off Cape Henry was only one of numerous battles fought by this dashing Gallic sea captain. Over fifty years of his long life, 1722-1788, were spent in the service of Louis XV and Louis XVI, in the Mediterranean, in India, on the North American coast, and in the West Indies. He fought in all the wars of his day, the War of the Austrian Succession, the Seven Years' War, and the War of the American Revolution which developed into a general European struggle.

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