

COMMENTARY

The Algerine Captive (1797)



Royall Tyler

(1757-1826)

“The hero, Updike Underhill, after an account of his youth and education in the backwoods of New England, and of his experiences as a schoolmaster there, goes on to Boston, begins the practice of medicine, proceeds to Philadelphia, where he meets Franklin, and to Virginia, where he is shocked at encountering a figure quite unknown to New England, a sporting parson. Later he goes to sea, visits London, tells of Tom Paine, observes the horrors of a slave ship, and is captured by the Algerians, among whom he spends the six years recounted in the second volume. The value of the book lies largely in its report of facts, which it gives clearly and freshly. That Tyler thought of the traveler and the novelist as about equally his models appears from his preface.”

Mark Van Doren
The American Novel 1789-1939, 23rd edition
(Macmillan 1921-1968) 9