



"LEANDER," "NEWCASTLE," "ACASTA,"
A CHASE IN THE FOG. (SEE PAGE 209.)

"CYANE" AND "LEVANT," "CONSTITUTION."

LAURELS OF THE AMERICAN TAR IN 1812.

NOTES ON AMERICAN SEAMANSHIP AND GUNNERY, THE OVERWEIGHT OF ENGLISH-FRENCH METAL, AND THE UNTRUSTWORTHINESS OF THE ENGLISH REPORT OF THE "SHANNON'S" VICTORY OVER THE "CHESAPEAKE."

IT was during the war of 1812 that the advantage of building our cruisers so that "separately [they] would be superior to any single European frigate of the usual dimensions" ¹ was demonstrated. In the three years of that war the British navy met with disasters which were unique in its annals. Before the close of the war the British Admiralty were compelled to build in imitation of the American cruisers. On the 17th of March, 1814, the following notice appeared in the London "Times": "Sir G. Collier was to sail yesterday from Portsmouth for the American station in the *Leander*, 54. This ship has been built and fitted out exactly upon the plan of the large American frigates."

The second idea embodied in the Secretary's report of 1794, in regard to building American cruisers, was "that if assailed by numbers they would be always able to lead ahead." At the very threshold of the war of 1812 the *Constitution* owed her escape from Captain Broke's squadron, in a large degree, to this very forethought in her construction. For three nights and two days, beginning on July 17, off New York, she was in imminent danger of capture, part of which time she was almost within gunshot of their leading ships. To this same

provision in her construction the *President* owed her remarkable career and numerous escapes from British squadrons and ships of the line while she was scouring all corners of the navigable globe in her daring essays against the enemy's commerce. Such was her success in this particular that the origin of the common sea phrase "By the jumping John Rodgers" is attributable to her exploits, Commodore John Rodgers being her commander during the greater part of this war.

Again, in April, 1815, while in the Southern Atlantic the sloop-of-war *Hornet* was chased three days and three nights by the British ship of the line *Cornwallis*, Admiral Sir George Burleton. So close was the pursuit that at times "shot and shell were whistling about our ears and not a person on board had the most distant idea that there was a possibility of escape. We all packed our things and waited until the enemy's shot would compel us to heave to and surrender. Captain Biddle mustered the crew and told them he was pleased with their conduct during the chase, and looked still to perceive that propriety of conduct which had already marked their character and that of the American tar generally; that we might soon expect to be captured, etc. Not a dry eye was to be seen at the mention of the capture of

¹ From the report of the Secretary of War, made April 1, 1794, in which he said that the six frigates authorized by the law of the previous March "separately would be superior to any single European frigate of the usual dimensions; that if assailed by numbers they would be always able to lead ahead; that

they could never be obliged to go into action but on their own terms, except in a calm; and that in heavier weather they would be capable of engaging double-decked ships." These six frigates were the *Constitution*, *President*, *United States*, *Chesapeake*, *Congress*, and *Constellation*.—EDITOR.



THE "CONSTITUTION" CHASED BY CAPTAIN BROKE'S SQUADRON.

The ports on the upper deck aft were roughly cut to meet the emergency. The sailors in the rigging threw water from buckets upon the sails to make them hold better the faint breeze, and below hose pipe was used to the same purpose. During the three days' chase boats were sent out to tow, and kedge anchors were used to warp the ship forward.

the poor little *Hornet*."¹ But notwithstanding the closeness of the chase the *Hornet* finally effected her escape through her sailing qualities.

In no instance up to the close of the war of 1812 was an American cruiser overtaken by a vessel of her own class when she was desirous of making her escape. The case of the *President* when pursued by Captain Hayes's squad-

¹ Private journal of one of the *Hornet's* officers.

ron on the 15th of January, 1815, cannot be noted as an exception, for the reason that while endeavoring to get out of New York harbor, the night before the chase, she grounded on the bar, where for two hours she thumped violently and became so "hogged" or "broken-backed" as to impair seriously her seaworthiness. A portion of her false keel was displaced, several rudder braces broken, and the frigate otherwise so injured as to render a

return to port imperative. This, however, owing to the strength and direction of the wind, was impossible, so she was forced over the bar and put to sea in a crippled condition. After dismantling the *Endymion*—during which action Commodore Decatur was wounded by a splinter—the *President* was attacked by the *Tenedos* and *Pomona* before her rigging could be repaired, and was forced to surrender.

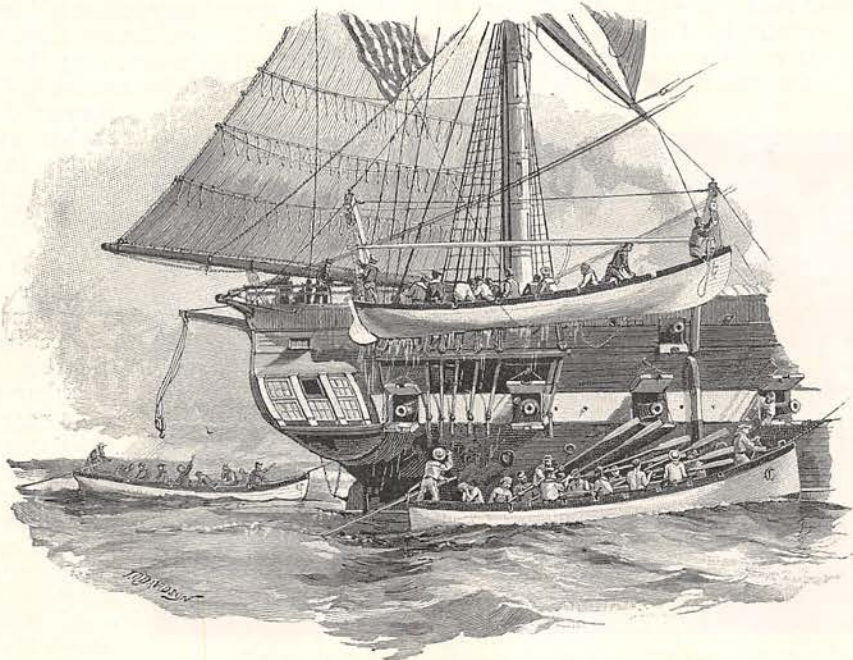
The American system of officering, manning, and carrying on discipline was superior to that of the English. Impressment was rarely, if ever, resorted to; the men enlisted of their own free will, and tempted by generous wages the finest seamen flocked to our service. Many of the petty officers had been mates and even masters in merchantmen before the war of 1812, and contributed not a little by their skill and experience to the results of that conflict. While English press-gangs were descending on quiet towns, and hurrying men into service without giving them time to arrange their affairs for the change, American frigates were having their complements filled with picked seamen by merely announcing vacancies. The superiority of most American crews during this war was so obvious as to need little discussion. William James concedes the point, and while speaking of the 44-gun frigate *United States* further adds:

The crew of the *United States* were the finest set of men ever seen collected on shipboard. Had Captain

Decatur and his five lieutenants been below in the hold, there were officers enough among the ship's company to have brought the action to the same successful issue.¹

But it was in the matter of officering the ship that the American system had the greatest advantage. Favoritism and family influence, which elevated men to high rank over the heads of older and more deserving officers, cost the British navy many bitter humiliations during the war of 1812. The battle of Lake Champlain affords a good illustration of the manner in which British commanders were outmanœvered and outwitted. The forces engaged on this occasion were nearly equal, that of the Americans being 86 guns of 1904 pounds of metal and 850 men, while the English force was 92 guns of 1900 pounds of metal and 1000 men. After the battle had lasted two hours without either side being able to turn the tide, Captain Macdonough in the *Saratoga* found himself in a most critical condition. The *Linnet* had secured a very advantageous position off the *Eagle's* starboard quarter where the latter could bring but few guns to bear. Finding his springs shot away, Captain Henly of the *Eagle* sheeted home his topsails, stood about, ran down the western side of the American line, and anchored between the *Saratoga* and *Ticonderoga*. This brought the *Eagle's* fresh (port) broadside in full play on the *Confiance*, Captain

¹ James's "History of the British Navy," Vol. V., p. 401.



HOISTING IN THE "CONSTITUTION'S" BOATS AT THE END OF THE THREE DAYS' CHASE.

Downie's flagship, but it also enabled the *Linnet* to turn the American line. Captain Pring of the *Linnet* immediately availed himself of this advantage and soon was athwart the *Saratoga's* forefoot, raking her from stem to stern with great effect.

As gun after gun was disabled the firing between the flagships gradually diminished until only a few cannon were in use. Aboard the *Saratoga* nearly all the carronades had been rendered useless by overcharging. Now that the *Linnet* was raking her with impunity, the situation of the American flagship was desperate in the extreme. To add to her accumulating disasters the bolt of the last carronade on the engaged side broke; the gun, flying off its carriage, tumbled down the main hatch. This left her with nearly every gun in her starboard battery dismounted, while the *Confiance* and *Linnet* were still keeping up an effective fire.

It was in this extremity, when by all human calculations the day was lost, that the forethought of the American commander came into play. When arranging his line of battle he took the precaution to anchor his vessels far enough apart so that should the starboard battery of any ship become disabled her commander, by tripping his bow anchor and then dropping a stern anchor, could swing his vessel around in the northerly breeze and bring a fresh broadside to bear on the enemy without breaking the line of battle or overlapping the ship astern.

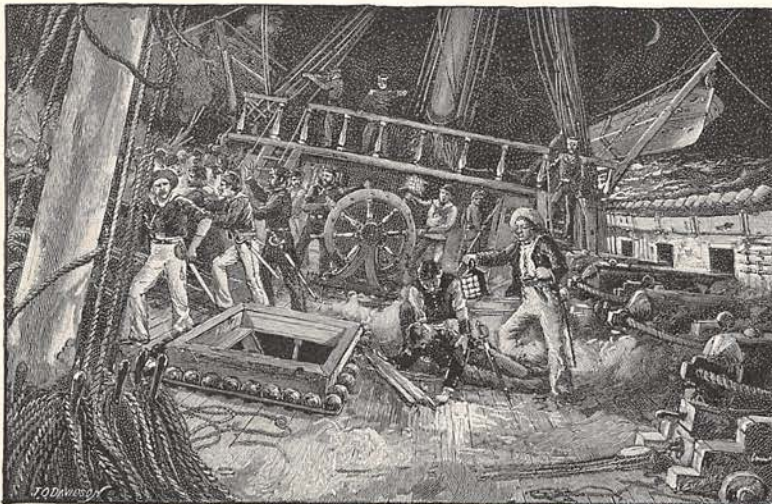
The time had now come when the *Saratoga* must either surrender or bring more guns to bear. Accordingly Captain Macdonough manned his capstan and tripped the bower anchor, at the same time letting go his stream

anchor over the stern. But unfortunately the wind had abated so that the ship remained motionless. A line, which had been made fast to the stream anchor, was then carried forward and hauled on. This slowly brought the vessel around, but during all of this time the *Linnet* was pouring in broadside after broadside, and now as the *Saratoga* exposed her stern the *Confiance* raked her with great effect. After several minutes of this fearful exposure Captain Macdonough succeeded in bringing his port battery into full play. The Americans then rushed to their guns and worked with vigor. Being subjected to the fire of this fresh broadside, the *Confiance* soon had the few remaining guns of her port battery disabled. Seeing the success of the *Saratoga's* maneuver, the British commander attempted it also. He hove in his bow cables until he tripped anchor. But further than this his ship would not move for want of wind, and lacking the quick expedients of the American officers, he saw his ship become a wreck without being able to strike a blow in return, so after a conflict of two hours and a half he surrendered.

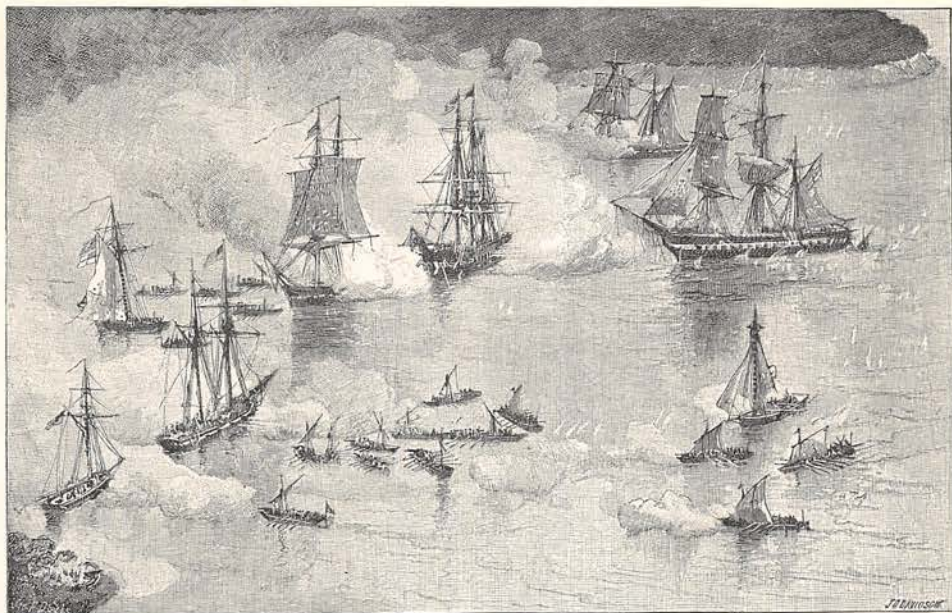
Another conspicuous illustration of the readiness of an American officer was afforded in the fourth cruise of the *Constitution*. Captain Charles Stewart, born of poor parents in the city of Philadelphia in 1778, entered upon the profession of the sea in his thirteenth year as cabin boy in a merchantman, and rose step by step through personal merit to the command of the favorite frigate of the American navy.

After his extraordinary action with the corvette *Cyane* and sloop *Levant* sixty leagues from Madeira in February, 1815 (both after a gallant resistance being captured), Captain

Stewart dropped anchor with his prizes in Port Praya, in the island of St. Jago, on the 10th of March. It was his intention to employ the merchant ship captured on the 18th of the preceding month as a cartel in which to send all prisoners to England, preparatory to which they were collected in groups on the *Constitution's* main deck. While the Americans were busily engaged



THE WOUNDING OF DECATUR DURING THE CHASE OF THE "PRESIDENT"
BY THE BRITISH SQUADRON.



"PREBLE." "TICONDEROGA." "EAGLE." "SARATOGA." "LINNET." "CONFIANCE."
 "CHUBB." "FINCH."

BRITISH GALLEYS.

BATTLE OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

The *Saratoga* and *Eagle* are represented in their second position; the *Chubb* has been captured and is being carried within the American line, and the *Confiance* is being raked by the *Saratoga*.

the officer of the deck, Lieutenant Shubrick, was attracted by an exclamation from one of the British midshipmen. Noticing that an English lieutenant reprimanded him in an undertone, Lieutenant Shubrick became suspicious of foul play or some conspiracy, and was about to communicate his fears to Captain Stewart, when a quartermaster called his attention to the sails of a large vessel just discernible through the fog in the offing. The sea at the entrance of the harbor was covered with a heavy mist, but in the lighter haze above the sails of a large ship making its way to port were visible.

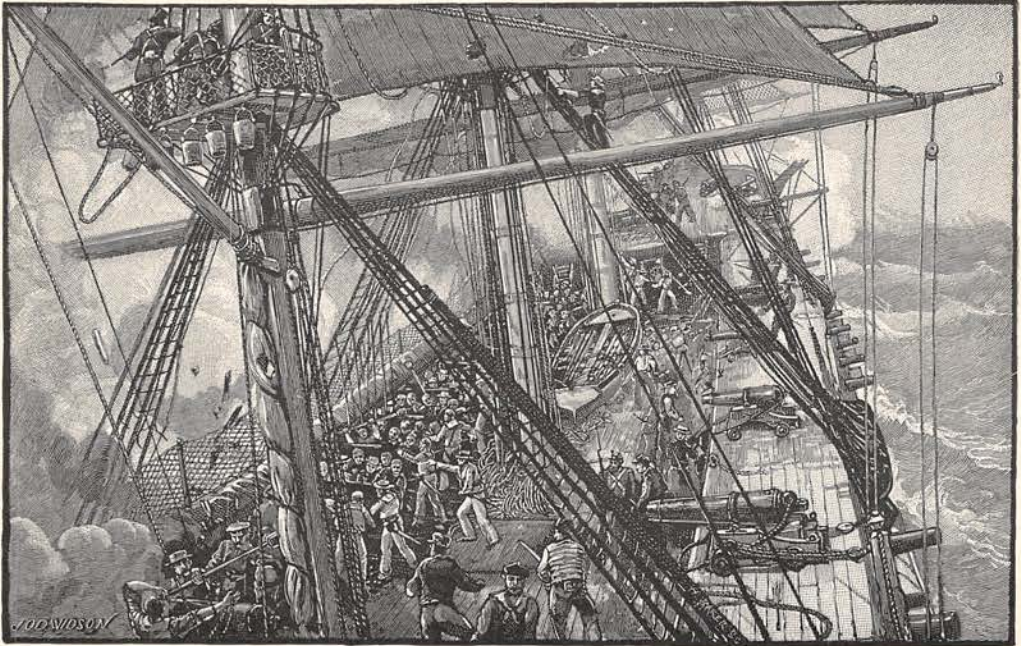
This apparition, evidently the cause of the midshipman's exclamation, was brought to the attention of Captain Stewart. As the fog shifted a little the sails of two more vessels, apparently heavy men-of-war, were discovered by the sharp-eyed quartermaster standing into the roads. After the experience of the *Essex* at Valparaiso, Captain Stewart well knew that English commanders could not be trusted to respect the rights of neutral ports that were not sufficiently fortified to enforce them. The defenses of Port Praya were impotent against a first-rate frigate, and should the sails descried in the offing prove to be those of English men-of-war, as five chances to one they were, the position of the *Constitution* and her prizes was critical in the extreme.

Captain Stewart instantly sent his crew to
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quarters, prisoners were hurried below, the cables cut, topsails set, and in seven minutes from the time of the first alarm the frigate was under way. Signals were made to the *Cyane* and *Levant* to follow, Lieutenants Hoffman and Ballard precipitately obeyed, and in an incredibly short time the three ships were speeding pell-mell down the harbor. A number of prisoners who had been landed were left behind, and observing the strange sails in the offing and surmising them to be English, they rushed to a battery and began firing so as to warn the approaching strangers of the presence of enemies.

The wind was fresh from the northeast, while the strangers were approaching the harbor from the south. Captain Stewart therefore hugged the north shore, hoping to get to sea to the windward of them. Just as the American vessels were clearing East Point the strangers came within long range. At this instant they discovered the Americans and crowded on all sail to intercept them. It now became a question of sailing. The *Constitution* crossed her topgallant yards, set foresail, mainsail, spanker, flying-jib, and her topgallant sails, while the two boats towing astern were cut adrift. The *Cyane* and *Levant* followed in quick succession, while the enemy luffed up, close-hauled their tacks, and settled down for a long and determined chase.

The strangers proved to be the English 50-



THE "CONSTITUTION" IN ACTION WITH THE "LEVANT" AND "CYANE."

On the right is seen the upper deck gangway carrying carronades.

gun frigate *Leander*, Sir George Collier, which we noticed as having "been built and fitted out exactly upon the plan of the large American frigates"; the 50-gun frigate *Newcastle*, Captain Lord George Stuart; and the 40-gun frigate *Acasta*, Captain Kerr. This powerful squadron had followed the *Constitution* across the Atlantic into this obscure quarter and now had her under their guns.

Although the American vessels had gained an offing it was still so foggy that the hulls of the enemy were concealed, so that Captain Stewart was unable to make out their force or nationality. All the ships, however, had every stitch of canvas set from royal studding-sails down, and were rushing through the water at ten knots. The *Acasta*, by laying her head close to the wind, succeeded in weathering the *Cyane* and *Levant*, but the splendid sailing qualities of the *Constitution* enabled Captain Stewart to hold his own. Observing that he was drawing away from his prizes and that the enemy must soon close on them, he, at ten minutes past one o'clock, signaled the *Cyane*, the sternmost vessel, to tack to the northwest, hoping thereby to divide the enemy's force. Lieutenant Hoffman tacked as ordered, but, to the surprise of all, none of the pursuing ships were detailed after her. Taking advantage of this blunder, the *Cyane* continued on this course until she had run the enemy out of sight, when she made for

America, arriving in New York on the 10th of April.

By 2.30 P. M. the *Newcastle* had gained a position off the *Constitution's* lee quarter and commenced firing by divisions. The shot splashed the water within a hundred yards of the ship, but did not reach her. At 3 P. M. the *Levant* was in the same danger from which the *Cyane* had so strangely been allowed to escape. Captain Stewart now signaled the *Levant* to head northwest also, hoping that this would draw off one of his pursuers at least. But, to the astonishment of every man in the American frigate, all the pursuing ships tacked after the *Levant*, whereupon Lieutenant Ballard changed his course to due west so as to regain the port, where he succeeded in anchoring under the guns of the fort.

The conduct of Sir George Collier in allowing the *Constitution* and her prizes to escape his powerful squadron has given rise to many conflicting explanations on the part of English writers. Some claim that he did not give the order for all the ships to tack after the *Levant*, others that the signal was misinterpreted, while many maintain that the flags became entangled.

It was in gunnery, however, that Americans attained their most conspicuous success. Long before the war of 1812 firing at targets was a regular order of routine, so that it has well been said that for each shot fired in earnest ten had been fired in practice. The "London

Times" for October 22, 1813, while speaking of the action between the *Enterprise* and *Boxer*, said:

What we regret to perceive stated, and trust will be found much exaggerated, is, that the *Boxer* was literally cut to pieces in sails, rigging, spars, and hull; whilst the *Enterprise* (her antagonist) was in a situation to commence a similar action immediately afterwards. The fact seems to be but too clearly established, that the Americans have some superior mode of firing; and we cannot be too anxiously employed in discovering to what circumstances that superiority is owing.

Sir Edward Codrington, in writing to Lady Codrington in reference to the *Peacock-Épervier* fight, states: "It seems that the *Peacock*, American sloop-of-war, has taken our *Épervier*. But the worst part of our story is, that our sloop was cut to pieces and the other scarcely scratched!"

The firing of the 44-gun frigate *United States*, Captain Decatur, during her action on October 25, 1812, with the 38-gun frigate *Macedonian*, Captain Carden, is described as wonderful. "The firing of the American gunners was so rapid that in a few minutes their ship was enveloped in a dense volume of smoke,

illuminated by lurid flashes of lightning and emitting a continuous roar of thunder." When the *Macedonian* came to close quarters with the idea of boarding, "the American carronades opened and added their fire to that of the long guns, so that by the time she was at close quarters the broadside of the *United States* appeared like a continuous line of flame, and at one time the enemy believed her to be on fire."

On the 18th of October, 1812, the American sloop *Wasp*, 18 guns, had a remarkable encounter in a heavy sea with the British sloop *Frolic*, 19 guns. In forty-three minutes the *Wasp* reduced her adversary to a wreck, and killed or wounded 90 out of a crew of 110 men; her own loss in a crew of 135 being only ten. At the end of the engagement the British ship *Poictiers*, 74 guns, hove in sight, and running down on the *Wasp* captured her and her prize.

In an action, of only twenty minutes, between the new sloop *Wasp* (namesake of the foregoing) and the *Reindeer* on June 28, 1814, in the English Channel, we are informed that the hull of the *Reindeer* was literally cut to pieces.¹ Another English writer observes: "In a line with her ports the *Reindeer* was liter-

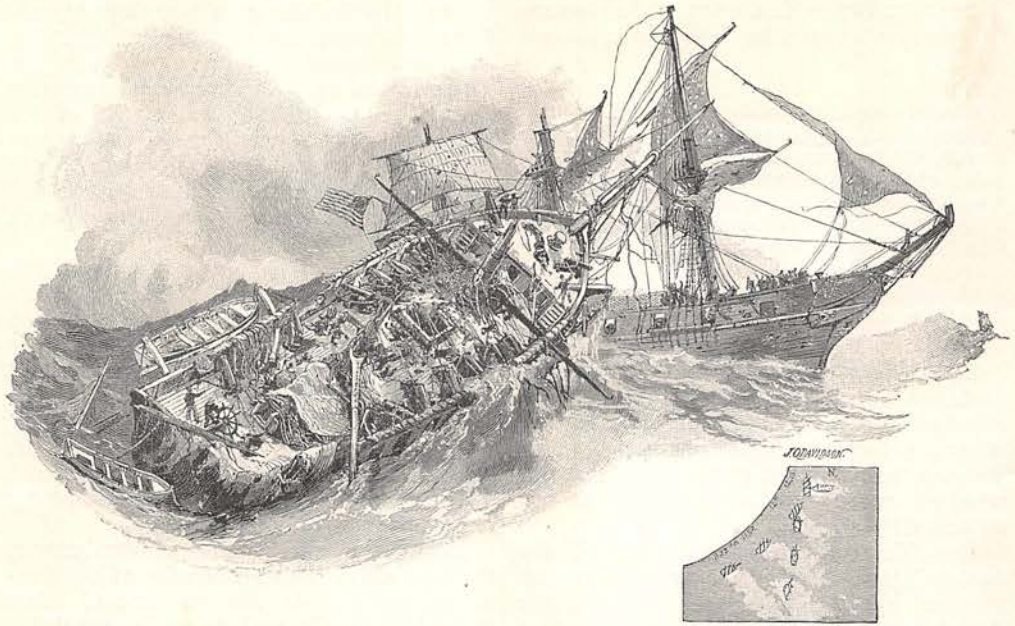


THE "UNITED STATES" CAPTURES THE "MACEDONIAN."

which from the enemy's deck appeared like a huge thunder-cloud rolling along the water,

¹ Allen's "Battles of the British Navy," Vol. II., p. 463.

ally cut to pieces; her upper works, boats, and spare spars were one complete wreck. Her masts were both badly wounded; particularly her foremast, which was left in a tottering



THE "FROLIC" REDUCED TO A WRECK BY THE FIRST "WASP."

state,"¹ and on the following day, in spite of all efforts, it went by the board. Finding his prize too shattered to keep afloat, Captain Blakely blew her up. The *Wasp* received six round shot in her hull, and 24-pound shot through her foremast and some injury to her rigging. Two months after this the *Wasp* had a night action with the *Avon*, also a sloop-of-war of her own rate, the *Wasp* receiving only four round shot in her hull and some considerable injury to her rigging. The fact that the *Avon* sank two hours after the *Wasp* was compelled by the approach of her consorts to leave her plainly shows that she was terribly shattered by the American's gunnery.

The proficiency of American gunnery in this war is perhaps best illustrated by the *Constitution's* first action, with the *Guerrière*, in which she was hulled but three times, while her antagonist, to use the words of her commander, was reduced to a "perfect wreck"² within forty minutes from the time the *Constitution* began to fire. This battle occurred on August 19, 1812. In her action with the *Java*, December 29, 1812, off the coast of Brazil, the *Constitution* was hulled but four times, and with the exception of her maintopsail yard she did not lose a spar.³ The *Java*, on the other hand, was "totally dismasted,"⁴ while her hull was so shattered and pierced with shot-

holes that it was impossible to get her to the harbor of San Salvador, which was only a few hours' sail. In her action with the *Cyane* and *Levant* the forces opposed were: *Constitution*, 51 guns with 1287 pounds of metal; British, 55 guns with 1508 pounds of metal. In this extraordinary action the *Constitution* was hulled only thirteen times, while the *Cyane* had every brace and bow-line cut away, "her main and mizzen masts left in a tottering state, and other principal spars wounded, several shot in the hull, nine or ten between wind and water."⁵ The *Levant* also was roughly handled.

Before dismissing the subject of gunnery we should take into consideration: 1. The inferior quality of American cannon and shot. 2. The deficiency in weight of American shot. 3. The fact that in two of the four actions between single frigates the English used French cannon and shot, which were eight per cent. heavier than their nominal English equivalents.

The first of these considerations has been mentioned in a general way, while the second, the deficiency in weight of American metal, has been touched upon by Cooper in an appendix to his "Naval History," but he has not brought it into the discussion of the battles. The third consideration, that of the use of French cannon and shot in at least two of the frigate actions, seems to have been overlooked.

¹ James's "History of the British Navy," Vol. VI., p. 163.

² Official report of Captain Dacres.

³ Cooper's "United States Naval History," Vol. II., p. 70.

⁴ Allen's "Battles of the British Navy," Vol. II., p. 414.

⁵ James's "History of the British Navy," Vol. VI., p. 249.

As to the first of these points we have indisputable testimony from both American and English sources. In some instances, owing to imperfect casting, shot flew to pieces even before reaching the mark. In a private letter published in a London paper of the year 1812, written by an officer in the British 36-gun frigate *Belvidera*, Captain Richard Byron, which was chased June 22, 1812, by Commodore Rodgers's squadron, we have proof of the inferiority of American shot as used in that chase. Speaking of one of the shot that came aboard the *Belvidera* from the *President* he says: "This shot being of bad quality, it split into about fifty pieces." The cannon also were dangerously defective. In chasing the *Belvidera*, the *President* lost sixteen men by the bursting of her bow chaser and only six from the enemy's fire. This catastrophe so disconcerted her crew that the remaining bow chaser was not used for some time after. In the action between the new 44-gun frigate *Guerrière* and the Algerine frigate *Mashouda* in 1816, one of the guns in the former burst, killing or wounding seven men. In arriving at an equitable comparison of the forces engaged in the war of 1812, therefore, this inferior quality of American cannon and shot must be constantly kept in mind.

In regard to the underweight of American shot, an English historian finds it "not worth inquiring whether or not this alleged trifling variation in weight between American and British shot does exist,"¹ though no point in favor of the other side is too infinitesimal for his consideration.

Owing to the primitive condition of American manufactures this discrepancy in the nominal weight of shot is exceedingly probable, and needs only the confirmation of a few specific instances for proof. In the action between the American sloop-of-war *Wasp* and the British sloop *Avon*, Captain Blakely officially reported to the Secretary of the Navy that "the four shot which struck [us] are all thirty-two pounds in weight, being a pound and three-quarters heavier than any belonging to this vessel." Cooper records that an American officer, after the engagement between the *Constitution* and *Guerrière*, actually weighed the shot of both frigates and found that the *Constitution's* 24-pound shot weighed but 22½ pounds; and in the appendix to his "Naval History" he says:

In the course of the war I personally weighed a quantity of shot, both English and American, and made a note of the result. It was found that the old shot, or those with which the ships were supplied at the commencement of the war of 1812,

¹ James's "Naval Occurrences between the United States and Great Britain," p. 10.

were comparatively lighter than those which had been cast at a later day; but in no instance was an American shot even then [that is, at the close of the war] found of full weight. On the other hand, the English shot were uniformly of accurate weight. Some of the American 32-pound shot weighed thirty pounds. The average of the 18-pound shot was about seventeen pounds; but it was understood, as this examination occurred several years after the peace, that the shot, as well as the guns, were then materially better than they had been previously to and during the war.

Theodore Roosevelt, in his "Naval War of 1812," states that the deficiency in weight averaged seven per cent. Thus a 32-pound shot weighed about thirty pounds, a 24-pound shot but 22½ pounds, and so on throughout all the grades of metal.

The importance of the third point, that in two of the four actions between single frigates the English used French cannon and shot, lies in the fact that a French 12-pound shot weighed thirteen pounds in English measurement, a French 18-pound shot weighed 19½ English pounds, and a French 24-pound shot twenty-six English pounds. In the action between the *Constitution* and *Guerrière*, and again between the *Constitution* and *Java*, the Americans were opposed to French-built frigates retaining their French guns and shot. The *Guerrière* was captured in 1806 by H. B. M. ship *Blanche*, and "on being transferred to the British navy became a valuable acquisition to the class of large thirty-eights."² The *Java*, formerly the *Renommée*, was captured from the French in the latter part of February, 1811.

During the thirty-four years prior to the close of this war, 1780-1814, the English had captured between one hundred and fifty to two hundred French vessels of war whose armaments aggregated from six thousand to eight thousand cannon, together with hundreds of thousands of very valuable shot. It is not reasonable to suppose that, when so many captured French vessels of war were taken into the British navy, this great quantity of expensive cannon was thrown aside for old iron. On the contrary, it is more than probable that the French cannon were retained in the ships in which they were captured, and which had been built expressly to accommodate these bulky engines of death.

It is still more probable that these captured French ships were supplied solely with captured French shot, for a 13-pound shot (French twelve pounds) was not cast to fit a 12-pound muzzle nor a 26-pound shot to fit a 24-pound muzzle, and so on throughout the list. Although it is quite possible to fire a 12-pound shot from

² James's "History of the British Navy," Vol. IV., p. 162.



THE "GUERRIÈRE" IN THE TROUGH OF THE SEA.

a 13-pound gun, and a 24-pound shot from a 26-pound bore, yet it cannot be presumed that the Admiralty supplied their frigates mounting 26-pound cannon with 24-pound shot when they had an enormous quantity of 26-pound shot cast expressly for their 26-pound guns; especially when they could not use this captured shot for English cannon.

In several instances James, as well as other English writers, speaks of the French cannon carried by English commanders, although not in connection with the actions mentioned above.

In the case of the *Constitution* and *Guerrière*, Mr. Cooper informs us in a note¹ — with no reference to the employment of French cannon in English ships, however — that an "officer of the *Constitution*, of experience and great respectability, who is now dead, assured the writer that he actually weighed the shot of both ships, and found that the *Constitution's* twenty-fours were only three pounds heavier than the *Guerrière's* eighteens, and that there was nearly the same difference in favor of the latter's thirty-twos." If the *Guerrière's* "eighteens" were English 18-pounders, this would make a deficiency of three pounds, or fourteen per cent., in the *Constitution's* shot, or just twice as much as was claimed to exist under any circumstances or was ever found to exist.

¹ Cooper's "United States Naval History," Vol. II., p. 58.

These irreconcilable discrepancies in figures can only be explained by calculating the *Guerrière's* eighteens as French eighteens, which makes everything clear. Her 18-pound shot weighed $19\frac{1}{2}$ English pounds, which was the scale used by the officer in question. He found the *Constitution's* twenty-fours were only "three pounds heavier," which would bring her shot down, not to twenty-one pounds, as would have been the case had the *Guerrière's* 18-pounders been English, but to $22\frac{1}{2}$ pounds, which, allowing for the discrepancy of seven per cent. that was found to exist in American metal, would be in strict keeping with all the figures given. There can be no doubt then, from the above evidence, that the *Guerrière* on the occasion of her engagement with the *Constitution* carried her original French armament and shot.

With the above conditions kept in view, namely, the inferior quality of American castings, the deficiency in weight of their shot, and the superior weight of French guns, we have a far more intelligent understanding of these two actions of the *Constitution* and the other engagements of this war.

In accounting for their naval disasters of 1812-15, English historians rightly state that in the first three frigate actions the Americans carried heavier metal; that where the English ship was armed with 18-pounders on the main deck the American carried 24-pound-

ers, and where the Englishman had 32-pounders on the fore-castle and quarter-deck the American had 42-pounders. But it was just this heavy metal which the English commanders declared would detract from the frigate's efficiency. British naval experts insisted that 24 and 42 pounders were too heavy. Experience had taught them that 18 and 32 pound calibers were the medium weights from which the highest possible effectiveness could be derived, and when 24 and 42 pounders were introduced in American frigates they pronounced them innovations, contrary to all established rules, highly characteristic of American assurance, and bound to end in disaster.

During the several years preceding the declaration of war American and British officers frequently interchanged visits, in which the heavy calibers of American frigates were criticized. Captain Carden of the *Macedonian*, whose exceptional delicacy in carrying out the inimical instructions of his government against American merchantmen had placed him on an intimate footing with American officers, often met Decatur in the *United States*, and on one of these occasions, while at the latter's table, "particularly pointed out the inefficiency of the 24-pounders on the main deck of the *United States*;" he said that they could not be handled with ease and rapidity in battle, and that long eighteens would do as much execution, and were as heavy as experience had proved a frigate ought to carry. 'Besides, Decatur,' said Carden, 'though your ships may be good enough, and you are a clever set of fellows, what practice have you had in war? There is the rub!'"¹ That Captain Carden held to the opinion that 18 and 32 pounders were superior to 24 and 42 pounders in point of effectiveness, long after his ship had been captured by the *United States*, is seen both in his official report of that action and in his address before his court-martial.

Such, then, was the opinion in reference to 24 and 42 pounders among British officers and naval experts before the war. After the war, however, they raise the cry of "heavier metal," "superior calibers," "it could never have been otherwise," "result of sheer superiority of the American frigate," etc., though this was not, as a rule, the cry raised by the English commanders involved in these actions.

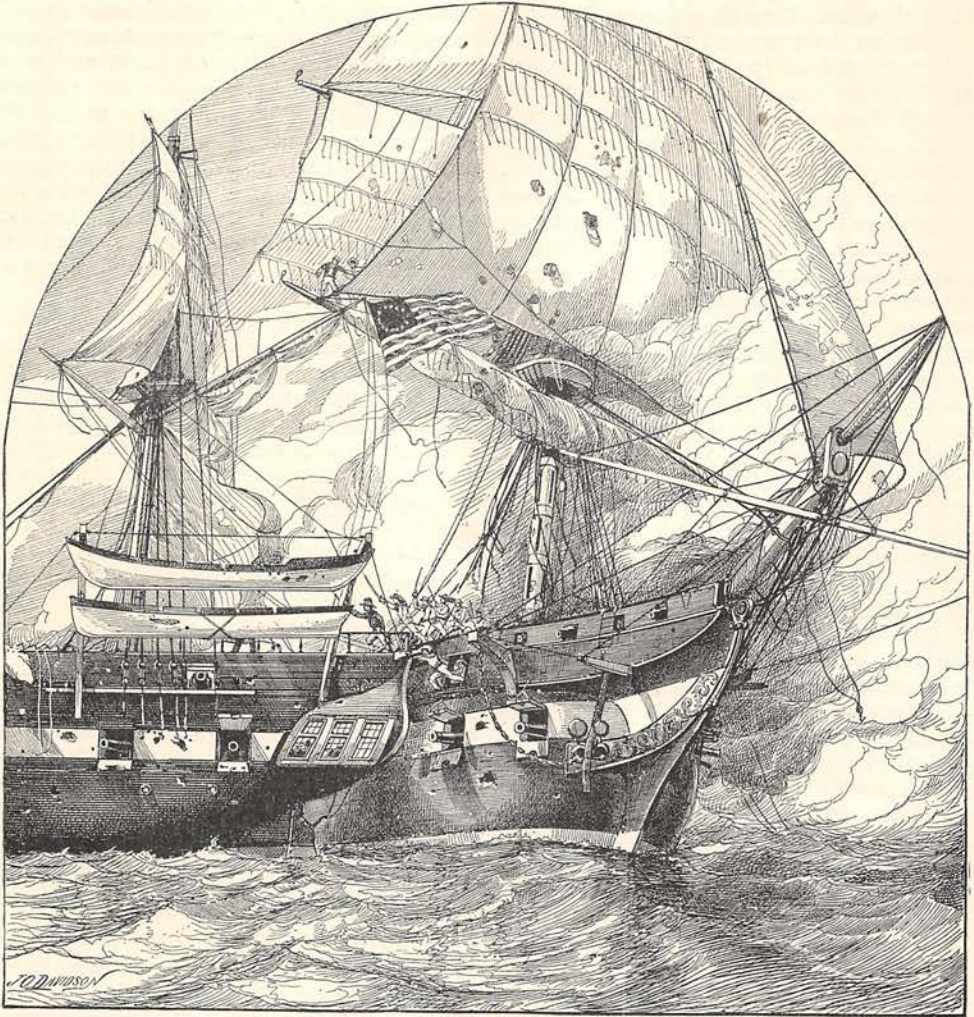
In order to test the relative value of ships, as ships, let us suppose that in the fight between the *United States* and *Macedonian* the two crews and their officers had exchanged frigates: 1—then we should have Captain Decatur, according to James, in "one of the finest frigates in the British Navy"; 2—with "the finest set

of men ever seen collected on shipboard"; 3—his ship carrying precisely the same number of long range guns as his opponent and of a caliber, according to English views and experience, more effective than that carried by his enemy; 4—he has the all-important weather gage; 5—his frigate has the "superiority of sailing," which together with the weather gage would enable him to keep at long range where he knew he had the advantage. It is very evident, then, that it is not so much a question of ships.

Although American frigates in point of effectiveness were superior to those of the English, yet I am persuaded that their victories were due not so much to the vessels as to the men who manœvered and fought them. We have just seen in our supposititious exchange of frigates that Captain Decatur's position was bettered twofold by his command of the *Macedonian*. Yet, as it was, he gained a hard-fought battle with a marvelously small amount of damage to his own ship, while that of his antagonist could not have been more expeditiously wrecked had she for the same length of time been opposed by a ship of the line.

This action and the engagements between the *Constitution* and *Guerrière* and the *Constitution* and *Java* stand unsurpassed for the wonderful difference in damage sustained by two frigates that mutually sought an engagement. I would not for a moment suggest that the British tar, in all these actions, did not fully maintain his well-deserved reputation for pluck. Captains Dacres, Carden, and Lambert and their several crews fought with a persevering heroism which must call forth eulogies from friend and foe alike. But the time had arrived when pluck was not sufficient. Naval warfare had reached that stage of development where brute strength and animal courage had become secondary considerations. Success now depended more on the higher discipline of the men, better training at the guns, the intelligent use of improved weapons, the skillful manipulations of the sails, and the thousand and one little improvements in, about, and all over a ship, which only a cultivated intellect would suggest. The superiority of American gunnery and seamanship of this war, their better arrangement and construction of their frigates, have been shown in this paper. These improvements, together with that indomitable pluck and quick perception which have ever characterized the American seaman, overwhelmed the British navy with disaster and consternation. This was the mainspring of our brilliant successes, and it was just in this particular, namely, the supremacy of the mind over matter, that our naval officers achieved their highest triumph.

¹ Mackenzie's "Life of Decatur," p. 157.



THE "SHANNON'S" CREW BOARDING THE "CHESAPEAKE."

It will prove a matter of interest, at this late day, to observe with what effect the news of the first three frigate actions with the United States was received in England. The capture of their first frigate, the *Guerrrière*, was taken with philosophical surprise. The news of the loss of the *Macedonian* was discredited at first in London, and the "Times" for December 26, 1812, says:

There is a report that another English frigate, the *Macedonian*, has been captured by an American. We shall certainly be very backward in believing a second recurrence of such a national disgrace. . . . We have heard that the statement is discredited at the Admiralty; but we know not on what precise grounds. Certainly there was a time when it would not have been believed that the American navy could have appeared upon the seas after six months' war with England; much less that it could, within

that period, have been twice victorious: *sed tempora mutantur*.

The news of the loss of the *Java*, which arrived in London, March 19, 1813, seems to have drawn the following resigned soliloquy from the "Times":

The public will learn with sentiments which we shall not presume to anticipate that a third British frigate has struck to an American. . . . This is an occurrence that calls for serious reflection — this and the fact stated in our paper of yesterday, that Lloyd's list contains notices of upwards of five hundred British vessels captured, in seven months, by the Americans. Five hundred merchantmen, and three frigates? Can these statements be true; and can the English people bear them unmoved? Any one who had predicted such a result of an American war this time last year would have been treated as a madman or a traitor. He would have been

told, if his opponents had condescended to argue with him, that long ere seven months had elapsed the American flag would be swept from the seas, the contemptible navy of the United States annihilated, and their maritime arsenals rendered a heap of ruins. Yet down to this moment not a single American frigate has struck her flag.

There has been a disposition among English writers to point to the action between the *Chesapeake* and *Shannon* as the one instance in which an American and English frigate met on equal terms, both equally prepared for battle and meeting in response to a challenge to single combat. A close investigation of the condition of the two frigates, however, will show that they met on very unequal terms, and not in response to a challenge to single combat.

Landing in New York in the latter part of March, 1813, after his brilliant victory in the *Hornet* over the *Peacock* on February 24, Captain Lawrence was received with great enthusiasm. Previous to his return he had been promoted to the rank of post captain and was now offered the command of the frigate *Constitution*, on the condition, however, that neither Captain Porter nor Captain Evans applied for her. This conditional offer, being distasteful to Lawrence, was declined, upon which the Secretary of the Navy gave him the unconditional command of that favorite ship. A few weeks after, however, Captain Lawrence was surprised by counter orders with instructions to repair immediately to Boston and take command of the *Chesapeake*, then nearly ready for sea.

From the time of her ignominious surrender to the *Leopard* in 1806, the *Chesapeake* had been stigmatized as an "unlucky ship."

After cruising among the West Indies for four months without success, Captain Evans headed the *Chesapeake* for the north, arriving at Boston on the 18th of April, 1813. While entering the harbor she lost a topmast, the men on it at the time being drowned. This accident was regarded among the sailors as an inauspicious omen for the next cruise, which, together with her previous reputation for bad luck and a tar's dread for such ships, rendered it exceedingly difficult to enlist another crew. The men made haste to leave, while her officers found employment in other vessels. Captain Evans, having lost the sight of one eye and being in imminent danger of losing that of the other, was granted a furlough while undergoing medical treatment.

Such was the condition of the *Chesapeake* after her last unsuccessful cruise. In the following letter to Captain Biddle of the *Wasp* Captain Lawrence shows a very evident disinclination to accept the command of the *Chesapeake*:

BOSTON, May 27, 1813.

DEAR SIR: In hopes of being relieved by Captain Stewart, I neglected writing agreeably to promise; but as I have given over all hopes of seeing him, and the *Chesapeake* is almost ready, I shall sail on Sunday, provided I have a chance of getting out clear of the *Shannon* and *Tenedos*, who are on the lookout. My intention is to pass out by Cape Sable, then run out west [east?] until I get into the stream, then haul in for the Cape Canso and run for Cape Breton, where I expect the pleasure of seeing you; I think your best chance of getting out is through the Sound. In haste, yours sincerely,

CAPTAIN BIDDLE.

JAMES LAWRENCE.

So strong was this aversion for the *Chesapeake* that we have it upon the authority of Washington Irving that Lawrence even requested to be retained in command of the sloop-of-war *Hornet* rather than accept the command of the frigate *Chesapeake*. He wrote "four letters successively to the Secretary" requesting some change in his last instructions, but receiving no answer he was constrained to obey.

Arriving in Boston, Captain Lawrence found the *Chesapeake* nearly ready for sea, wanting only an adequate complement. She had been provisioned for a long cruise to the northwest with a view of breaking up the enemy's whale fisheries off the coast of Greenland. On the morning of June 1, while the *Chesapeake* was at anchor in President Roads, the British 38-gun frigate *Shannon*, Captain Broke, appeared in the offing and by her manœuvres seemed to invite the American to come out and engage. Captain Lawrence had arrived in Boston but a few days before and was unacquainted with his officers, men, or ship. The first lieutenant, O. A. Page, an officer of experience, was confined on shore by a serious illness of which he soon after died. His place was supplied by Lieutenant Ludlow of the marines, who, though an officer of merit, was "scarcely twenty-one years of age,"¹ and was in a strange position where experience was indispensable. The second lieutenant, Mr. Budd, was the only commissioned sea officer of experience in the ship. The positions of third and fourth lieutenants were also vacant and were filled by Midshipmen Cox and Ballard, who now served in these capacities for the first time. This most unfortunate inexperience among the lieutenants, even with a well-trained crew, would have much embarrassed the working and fighting of a frigate. But it will be interesting to discover what kind of men these young officers had to manage.

The *Chesapeake's* crew, as finally brought together, was composed in a large measure of landsmen, foreigners,—the boatswain's

¹ Ludlow's monument, Trinity churchyard, New York City.

mate being a Portuguese,—and the least desirable sailors in port, the better seamen naturally preferring a better ship. So ignorant were the officers of the *Chesapeake* of their own men that one of her lieutenants joined a party of British boarders supposing them to be Americans. The ship's company had not been together on blue water a single day. The captain, just arrived, took charge of a strange ship with a green crew, with only one lieutenant who had ever served in that capacity before, while the crew was largely composed of landsmen who did not know the mainbrace from a marlinspike. Besides all this there was the by no means fanciful disadvantage of an "unlucky ship."

Such being the condition of the *Chesapeake* it is surprising that Captain Lawrence did not postpone the meeting until he could bring his men under better training. It afterwards appeared that Captain Broke had sent a written challenge to Lawrence, requesting the latter to select some time and place "at any bearing and distance you please to fix off the south breakers of Nantucket, or the shoal of St. George's Banks, so that the two frigates might engage in single action, both equally prepared." This challenge did not arrive in Boston until after the *Chesapeake's* departure;¹ so when Captain Lawrence observed the British frigate in the offing apparently daring him to give battle he understood it as a challenge to immediate action, and, obeying the impulse of a brave but impetuous nature, he made sail to engage. The *Chesapeake* went out to meet the *Shannon*, not prepared for single combat, not in response to Captain Broke's challenge, but as if the two vessels had met casually before the harbor.

We will now turn to English records and investigate the condition of the *Shannon* and the causes which led Captain Broke so earnestly to desire an action with the *Chesapeake*. According to Mr. Young, the naval historian, "From the time that Captain Broke took command of her [the *Shannon*] he had carefully trained her crew in gunnery and in every other exercise calculated to make them really efficient in the day of trial." Turning to other records, we find that Captain Broke assumed command of the *Shannon* on the 14th of September, 1806, so that up to this date he had commanded her over six years, and developed her efficiency in speed and in battle.

It further appears that Captain Broke had not only been in continuous command of the *Shannon* over six years, but that his present crew had served under him five years, for Mr. Allen informs us that "The crew of the *Shannon* had been five years together commanded

by the same captain." So we find that Captain Broke was thoroughly acquainted with his crew. That he had trained them to the highest possible degree of efficiency, and that he was regarded as an unusually able disciplinarian for the British navy of that period, is seen in the following from Mr. James:

Previously to our dismissing the action of the *Shannon* and *Chesapeake* we shall confer a service on the profession by stating as much as we know of the means taken by Captain Broke to endow his men with that proficiency the effects of which were so decisive and astonishing. Every day for about an hour and a half in the forenoon, when not prevented by chase or the state of the weather, the men were exercised at training the guns, and for the same time in the afternoon in the use of the broadsword, pike, musket, etc. Twice a week the crew fired at targets, both with the great guns and musketry, and Captain Broke, as an additional stimulus beyond the emulation excited, gave a pound of tobacco to every man that put a shot through the bull's-eye.

Captain Brenton in his "Naval History of Great Britain" says: "The British navy, depressed by repeated mortifications, had in some measure lost its spirits, and the dissatisfaction expressed in the public journals of the empire produced a feeling of discontent and disgust in the bosom of our seamen." During the eighteen years preceding the war of 1812 the British navy had matched its strength against the strongest marine powers of the world, and in some one hundred and fifty actions between single ships it was defeated but five times, and on those five occasions the British vessel was inferior in force to her antagonist. But in the short space of six months this same navy had suffered five consecutive defeats, in one of which its vessel was acknowledged to be of superior force, and had gained not one corresponding success! And this too from what the "London Times" called "the contemptible navy of the United States."

Thus it was that the *Shannon*, the best frigate on the North American station, appeared before Boston harbor with a perfect crew, augmented by seamen taken from a recaptured merchantman, and burning with a desire to avenge these "repeated mortifications" and in some degree mitigate the humiliation of their recent disasters. Mr. James virtually admits that the *Shannon* on this occasion had been so thoroughly prepared for battle as to be nearly or quite able to give battle successfully to the *Constitution*—it being borne in mind that the *Constitution* was a much heavier frigate than the *Chesapeake*, one rating as a 44-gun and the other as a 36-gun ship.

Even while the *Chesapeake* was sailing out

¹ Washington Irving.

of Boston harbor Captain Lawrence had a foretaste of the quality of his crew. Having cleared the land he called them together and gave them a short harangue. In the midst of his speech he was interrupted by their loud murmurs and mutinous attitude.¹ When allowed to finish his remarks "a scoundrel Portuguese, who was boatswain's mate,"² spoke up and demanded in an insolent manner prize money which had been due to some of the crew for several weeks past. Here was an awakening for Captain Lawrence! An enemy in the poor quality and dangerous disposition of his crew, and a powerful foe awaiting his oncoming.

Sir Provo Wallis, senior admiral of the British navy, and in 1813 second lieutenant of the *Shannon*, describes the approach of the frigate as a beautiful sight. He says "Lawrence displayed great skill and tactics when closing with us, to prevent our fire, which, however, we did not attempt, for Broke had given orders not to fire whilst the gallant fellow keeps his head towards us."³ Just before the action opened Sir Provo handed his watch to a seaman who was stationed below decks in the magazine, remarking, "You will be safe; should anything happen to me, give this to my father." By this watch the seaman timed the firing, and "by it we know the cannonading lasted for only eleven minutes."⁴

The *Chesapeake's* armament as given by Sir Provo Wallis, who took command of her immediately upon her surrender and remained in her for a week after, was: "Main deck, 28 long 18-pounders; quarter-deck, 16 short 32-pounders; fore-castle, 4 short 32-pounders and 1 long 18-pounder — 49 guns in all";⁵ giving a total weight, when allowing for deficiency in weight in American shot, of 1081 pounds. Out of her complement of 340 she lost 47 killed and 99 wounded, making in all 146.⁶ The fact which reflects most credit is that the loss in the *Chesapeake* was confined to the American portion of the crew, the foreigners skulking about the ship, seeking to escape their own officers as well as the enemy. The *Chesapeake* was not surrendered until every officer in the ship was either killed or wounded.

The *Shannon*, according to English accounts, carried 28 long 18-pounders, 4 long 9-pounders, 1 long 6-pounder, 16 short 32-pounders, and 3 short 12-pounders; in all 52 guns with 1094 pounds of metal. Her com-

plement is given at 330, out of which she lost 23 killed and 56 wounded; total, 79.

COMPARATIVE FORCE AND LOSS.

	Guns.	Lbs.	Crew.	Killed.	Wounded.	Total.
Chesapeake.....	49	1081	340	47	99	146
Shannon.....	52	1094	330	23	56	79
					Time,	15 m.

In connection with this battle Mr. James makes this statement: "Out of a crew including eight recaptured seamen and twenty-two Irish laborers, two days in the ship," Captain Broke increased his force, etc. The impression derived from this wording is that twenty-two out of the thirty men taken into the *Shannon* just before the action were landsmen, more in the way than of use. Inquiring of Admiral Wallis in reference to this point the writer was authorized to state that "the 'twenty-two Irish laborers' on board the *Shannon* were a part of the thirty as stated in Broke's challenge to Lawrence," where they are distinctly described as "thirty seamen, boys, and passengers."

The *Chesapeake* and *Shannon*, as compilations of wood, iron, and guns, were as equally matched as any two frigates possibly could be. In point of preparation, however, which is of vital importance, the *Shannon* had an overwhelming superiority, as seen in the results. Had the *Chesapeake* been a 44-gun frigate, or even a 60-gun razeed, and had come into this action under the same conditions, the issue hardly could have been different.

It has frequently been stated by students of history, and inscribed by at least one historian, that it was doubtful if Captain Lawrence ever gave expression to the words, "Don't give up the ship." In reference to this point the writer was authorized by Sir Provo Wallis to publish the following statement: "We [officers of the *Shannon*] heard that when they were carrying Captain Lawrence below, mortally wounded, he uttered the words, 'Don't give up the ship.'" It hardly seems possible that such a myth could be started during the great excitement of battle and the confusion consequent on its termination and immediately after have reached the ears of the British officers.

Furthermore an officer of the *Chesapeake*, writing in a private letter of the voyage of the two ships from Boston to Halifax after the battle, remarks: "Captain Broke and Captain Lawrence were both delirious from their wounds. . . . When Captain Lawrence could speak, he would say, 'Don't give up the ship.'" This clearly shows that these words were strongly impressed upon his mind when he received his mortal wound.

Perhaps no naval encounter of this war called from contemporary writers and newspapers on both sides of the Atlantic so much

¹ Washington Irving; also Brighton's "Memoir of Admiral Sir P. B. V. Broke."

² Washington Irving.

³ Sir Provo to the writer.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Official report of Lieutenant Budd.

misrepresentation and exaggeration as the battle between the *Chesapeake* and *Shannon*. The Americans were filled with the profoundest gloom and an unreasonable loss of confidence in their navy, while the English gave vent to most extravagant rejoicings; simply because an English frigate had captured an American of the same force. The published official report of Captain Broke contains the following episode: "Mr. Smyth, who commanded in our foretop, stormed the enemy's foretop from the foreyard arm, and destroyed all the Americans remaining in it." Sir Provo Wallis, however, who was present on that occasion, gives a somewhat different rendering. The "storming" he flatly contradicts. "It was mere invention 'Smith's having stormed her foretop'; but he did board her from our foreyard and slid down on one of her backstays." The same published official report observes: "The Lieutenants Johns and Law, of the marines, bravely boarded at the head of their respective divisions." To this Sir Provo replies: "Neither did the officers of the marines board, for when I took command of the quarter-deck I found them there." The report furthermore goes on to say: "Both ships came out of the action in the most beautiful order, their rigging appearing as perfect as if they had been only exchanging a salute." Admiral Wallis thought otherwise, for he says: "It was equally erroneous to say that the ships came out of action as perfect as if they had been only exchanging a salute; the fact being that our lower rigging was all cut through, and the masts, consequently, unsupported, so that had any sea been on they would have gone over the side." Finally, the report states: "I [Broke] was only capable of giving command till assured our conquest was complete; and then directing Second Lieutenant Wallis to take charge of the *Shannon* and secure the prisoners, I left the third lieutenant, Mr. Falkner (who had headed the main-deck boarders), in charge of the prize." In reference to this Admiral Wallis states: "Finally, the story of Broke having given me the orders to take charge of the *Shannon*, and Falkner the *Chesapeake*, was fabulous."

The English official report as published is dated "*Shannon*, Halifax, June 6, 1813," and is signed "P. B. V. Broke." The following medical certificate, however, proves that Captain Broke on the 6th of June, 1813, and for

six days before and several weeks after, was absolutely unable "to dictate or write" any account of the action whatever.

These are to certify that I, the undersigned, David Rowlands, M. D., F. R. S., late surgeon of H. B. M. Naval Hospital at Halifax, in Nova Scotia, was there when H. M. S. *Shannon* arrived with her prize, the American frigate *Chesapeake*, on Sunday, the 6th of June, 1813. The former was commanded by the present Captain Wallis, owing to the dreadful wound which Captain Broke had received in the action with the enemy a few days previous. On the 7th of June I was requested by Mr. Alexander Jack, the surgeon of the *Shannon*, to visit Captain Broke, confined to bed at the Commissioner's house in the dockyard, and found him in a very weak state, with an extensive saber wound on the side of the head, the brain exposed to view for three inches or more; he was unable to converse, save in monosyllables, and, I am sure, totally unable to dictate or write an account of the action for some time afterwards, owing to his severe wounds, loss of blood, and the shock his whole frame must have experienced by the blow on the head. . . . I grant this certificate to Captain Wallis, being called to do so by the death of Mr. Jack, the surgeon.

[Signed]

D. ROWLANDS, M. D.

Thus it appears that this published official report signed "P. B. V. Broke" was neither dictated nor authorized by that gallant officer, but was "a concoction of Commissioner Woodhouse and Captains Capel and Byron." Even had the gentleman who drew up the letter submitted it to the inspection of those personally engaged in the battle, said Admiral Wallis, "I would have corrected the errors."

It is such a disclosure as this that justifies American historians in hesitating to accept the official reports of the British commanders, as given to the public, as accurate copies of the originals when these originals are so jealously withheld from the scrutiny of impartial eyes; especially when English historians themselves repeatedly depart from the figures given in these published reports. The writer made every endeavor and brought every influence to bear in order personally to inspect and copy the original reports of all British commanders concerned in the war of 1812. But all to no purpose, the answer being, "Their Lordships express to you their regret at not being able to comply with this request, as the regulations in force preclude all public inspection of Admiralty records after the year 1800."

Edgar S. Maclay.



thusiasm, and his statesmanlike judgment. His appearance in person before a committee of Congress in 1886 was a great historical event of the triumphant war for the rights of the intellect before the law. Unlike other and younger literary men, it was not necessary for him to spend laborious and continuous days, weeks, or months in the conflict. Such was the power of his name, and the trenchancy of his occasional blows, such

the cumulative impulse of his fame and abilities, that his work, though done with apparent ease, was great and effective.

And now this immense intellectual and moral force is with us only as a memory and a record. Yet for many a day and year the name and words of Lowell will light the path of the republic of which he was the lover and laureate.

OPEN LETTERS.

"Laurels of the American Tar in 1812."

I. CRITICISM BY MR. POWELL.

THE article written by Edgar S. Maclay on the "Laurels of the American Tar in 1812" which appeared in THE CENTURY for December last is well written and well illustrated, but contains several statements needing correction.

1. It fails to set forth the great difference in size, 40 to 50 per cent., which prevailed between the combatants in most of the actions. For instance, the American 44-gun frigates which severally captured three British 38-gun frigates in single fight were each superior in size to their adversaries. The "load displacement" of the *Constitution* is always stated in American navy lists at 2200 tons, but the load displacement of British 38's was only about 1500 tons. As to the "tons burden" there is a large mistake in that entered to the English frigates in Emmons's "History of the United States Navy." It is almost ludicrous to compare the action of the *Levant* and the *Cyane* with the *Constitution* as at all between equal forces. The two small British ships only averaged 500 tons burden each, and the American over 1500; the short carronades of the former were nearly useless against the heavy long guns of their opponent.¹

2. The statement that English shot always were of full weight, and American generally seven per cent. under weight, is more than doubtful. Simmons in Heavy Ordnance, 1837, states that English shot were under the nominal weight, and Colonel Owen, Professor of Artillery to Woolwich College, gives tables showing that when the shot, long after the war of 1812, had been rather increased in size, they were still below weight, so that an eighteen-pound ball weighed, even then, only seventeen pounds and eleven ounces. Sir Howard Douglas in "Naval Gunnery" remarks that the English cannon had more windage than the French and American; hence the ball would be rather smaller.

3. It is exceedingly improbable that the *Guerrière* in 1812 would have on board French guns and shot since her capture so long before as 1806. The utmost precision and uniformity in the naval and military services is necessary for supply and mutual exchange and support with cannon, shot, ammunition, etc., and those

¹ The official records of the English Admiralty and of the French Marine have clear evidence of the exact size of their 38- and 40-gun frigates at the commencement of this century; the large national collections of naval models in London and in Paris agree with these records, and the scientific works of both countries on naval architecture support the same facts. Adding the historical works of James and Brenton, we get an accumulation of evidence which must be absolutely conclusive to unbiased minds. Thus all this evidence has the remarkable quality of entire agreement as to the dimensions of the frigates, which are

points are carefully attended to in all regular services. How could one ship supply another with guns or shot if they did not exactly match the regulations?

4. Mr. Maclay, again, has not mentioned the respective complements of men. The American large frigates had 470 men; the British 38's had but 300 regular complement, all told; as often less as more. He is mistaken in giving the *Chesapeake* only 340; Admiral Preble, U. S. N., writing in the American magazine "United Service," acknowledges she had 390, but he overrates the crew of the *Shannon*. The total number of persons on board the *Shannon* of every grade was 330, and there is no mystery how it was composed, namely 300 full complement, 8 lent by her consort, and 22 Irish laborers or passengers only just pressed out of a merchant ship. Owing to Captain Broke's being wounded and temporarily unable to attend to business, his friends wrote the official report for him, and unfortunately were not sufficiently precise in their inquiries; but the report, notwithstanding, is abundantly correct for all practical purposes, the errors being of no importance. It is alleged by James that the *Chesapeake*, far from having a "scratch crew," retained on board the greater part of the men that had served the two years on her previous voyage, and the officers were most fastidious in picking out none but the best men to fill up with. See, in Mr. Maclay's own article, his reference to "picked seamen," page 207. It seems unlikely that when sailing out to meet the *Shannon* the men would dare to annoy Captain Lawrence with an ill-timed application for the prize money of the previous cruise, unless the spokesman at all events represented a large proportion of the complement. Out of the *Shannon's* "52 guns" four were mere boat guns or exercising pieces, and two of those fitted as stern-chasers were not once fired in the action.

5. The artist has taken poetical license in depicting the American ships as rather smaller than the British instead of much larger; the *Constitution* is drawn with three or four ports on the quarter-deck instead of eight or nine.

6. I refuse to believe that the *Constitution* in two or three hours' close action with the *Java* was hulled only four times. The official report allows 34 killed and

given as varying from 150 to 155 feet long and most nearly 40 feet or 12¼ meters in extreme breadth. Some recent transatlantic writers make the length more by measuring in the projection of the counter; but that is contrary to rule. Any one who really understands the subject of tonnage is invited to explain how such dimensions could possibly give a total of much more than 1100 tons Congress measure or 1030 Philadelphia measure. But the American frigates by the former rule, being of 1576 tons, were 43 per cent. larger than British or French.—H. Y. P.

wounded, and the British account says many more. Professor Frost in his history of the United States Navy says "the shattered and decayed state of the *Constitution* required her return to port." What does "shattered" mean? By the way, Fenimore Cooper remarks that Captain Hull wrote two reports of the action with the *Guerrière*, and suggests the other should be published also. Why not?

I shall not attempt to deny that the British in 1812, after twenty years of victories, had become careless and over-confident, while the Americans exhibited much efficiency in profiting by prearranged superiority of force, a superiority more generally confessed now than at the time of the war itself.

Not wishing to occupy too much of your space, I will only refer readers who wish for further evidence to the "Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine," London, for September, 1890; to the "Army and Navy Journal," New York, during the autumn of 1889; to the new appendices to the last edition of James's "Naval History," 1886, Volume VI, and to Colburn's "United Service Magazine," London, of April, 1885.

LONDON, January, 1891.

H. Y. Powell.

II. MR. MACLAY'S REJOINER.

IN answer to H. Y. Powell's criticism on my article I will say in brief (referring to his numbered paragraphs):

1. The "load displacement" is not a fair comparison because the American frigates were more heavily built, had heavier stanchions, thicker masts, heavier armaments, etc., all of which, of course, made a greater "load displacement," but does not show that there was "40 to 50 per cent." difference in size. I call Mr. Powell's attention to an article written by himself in the September (1890) number of the "Illustrated Naval and Military Magazine" of London, in which he says that the American 44-gun frigates were about 175 feet long and 45 feet beam while the British 38-gun frigate of the war of 1812 was 155 feet length and 40.3 feet beam. This certainly is not the "40 to 50 per cent." difference in size which Mr. Powell speaks of. But according to American accounts the *Constitution* was only 12 feet longer and had a trifle more beam than the *Guerrière*. I frankly admitted in my article that the American frigates were much better, perhaps "40 to 50 per cent." better, if Mr. Powell chooses, but I do not admit that difference in size as commonly understood.

I also call Mr. Powell's attention to Captain Dacres's opinion of the relative force of the two frigates, and I think Mr. Powell will admit that Captain Dacres is something of an authority on the subject, as he commanded the *Guerrière* when captured by the *Constitution*, and afterward was many days in the latter frigate, thereby having a better opportunity than either myself or Mr. Powell could ever have of judging the two ships. I think also Mr. Powell will admit that Captain Dacres had far more interest in discovering a "40 to 50 per cent." difference between the two frigates, if such difference existed, than either Mr. Powell or myself. That before this engagement Captain Dacres considered the *Guerrière* of sufficient size to capture the *Constitution* is seen in the following challenge:

Captain Dacres, commander of His Britannic Majesty's frigate *Guerrière*, presents his compliments to Comman-

der Rogers of the United States frigate *President* [sister ship to the *Constitution*], and will be very happy to meet him, or any other American frigate of equal force to the *President*, off Sandy Hook, for the purpose of having a social tête-à-tête.

British commanders were fully aware of the size of American 44-gun frigates at the time of this challenge. That up to the time of this action Captain Dacres had not changed this opinion is seen in the following: On the 10th of August, or nine days before the engagement, the *Guerrière* captured the American brig *Betsy* commanded by Mr. Orne. Mr. Orne was aboard the *Guerrière* when that frigate met the *Constitution*, and relates: "I soon saw from the peculiarity of her [*Constitution's*] sails and from her general appearance that she was, without doubt, an American frigate, and communicated the same to Captain Dacres. He immediately replied that he thought she came down too boldly for an American, but soon after added, 'The better he behaves, the more honor we shall gain by taking him.'" (See Coggshall's "History of American Privateers.")

Even after the action, when Captain Dacres and his officers had been several days in the *Constitution*, thus having an excellent opportunity of comparing the two ships, he still entertained the same views, and immediately on landing wrote that "the loss of the ship is to be ascribed to the early fall of her mizzen-mast." (See Official Report of Captain Dacres.)

This opinion is still more forcibly stated by Captain Dacres several months after the event. In his defense before his courtmartial he says: "Notwithstanding the unlucky issue of this affair, such confidence have I in the exertions of the officers and men who belong to the *Guerrière*, and I am so well aware that the success of my opponent was owing to fortune, that it is my earnest wish, and would be the happiest moment of my life, to be once more opposed to the *Constitution* with them under my command, in a frigate of similar force to the *Guerrière*."

Such is the opinion of Captain Dacres in reference to the comparative size of the *Constitution* and *Guerrière*, expressed after having had unsurpassed opportunities for inspecting both ships, and uttered after mature deliberation. Neither he nor any of the frigate commanders of this war claimed that the American frigates they fought were "40 to 50 per cent." larger; such claims being the work of Mr. James, whom Mr. Powell seems to follow.

2. As to this point I do not see that any answer is needed. In my article I gave three or four authorities, both English and American, which were contemporaneous with the battles in which the ammunition was used. Mr. Powell refers to an authority in 1837, and to Sir Howard Douglas, who was later yet. What happened to the shot in 1837 or later I in no way discussed. I treated of shot in the war of 1812 only, so that Mr. Powell's two rather *post-bellum* authorities do not affect my argument in the least.

3. As to this point I dealt in facts and gave my authorities in the article. An officer *actually weighed* the *Guerrière's* shot, and that is better evidence than probabilities or improbabilities.

4. I showed in my article that the American crews were superior, both in numbers and quality. I do not see that I am mistaken in giving the *Chesapeake* 340 men. My authority is official, being none less than

Emmons's "Statistical History of the United States Navy," p. 66. This is the United States Government record of the navy. The same number is given by all recognized naval historians. Admiral Preble never pretended to be an authority on the war of 1812. What he wrote in some magazine article is liable to error, and, as regards the crew of the *Chesapeake*, is in disagreement with all the naval authorities of that period.

I have in no place said that Captain Broke's forged official report was not "abundantly correct." My point was to prove that at least one letter was an absolute forgery. This I did. This—taken in connection with the fact that there are other official letters which the Admiralty refused me the privilege of inspecting, and which are said even by British writers to be "garbled" so as to reduce the humiliation of British defeat—forms evidence amounting almost to proof that official reports of other British commanders have been so garbled as to detract from the American victory, and affords us ample ground for questioning some of their figures.

"Picked seamen" in my article referred to the earlier part of this war. It is a well-known fact that by June, 1813, many American privateers and seamen had been captured by the British, and as the Admiralty refused to exchange prisoners (thereby hoping to check American enterprise on the sea) seamen became very scarce. My authorities for saying so are Washington Irving, Cooper, and Niles's Register, besides others. On the 45th page, Volume II, "Spanish Papers," Washington Irving says: "It was only with great difficulty that any men could be induced to enlist in her [the *Chesapeake*]."

As to its being "unlikely" that the *Chesapeake's* crew should "dare to annoy Captain Lawrence with an ill-timed application for money," Washington Irving and the Rev. Dr. Brighton, the English biographer of Captain Broke of the *Shannon*, say that the crew mutinied, and "that a scoundrel Portuguese who was boatswain's mate demanded prize checks for the men" (Irving's "Spanish Papers," Vol. II, p. 47; also Brighton's "Memoirs of Admiral Broke," p. 165).

My authority for placing the *Shannon's* guns at 52 is none other than James (Vol. VI, p. 53), who says she carried "28 long 18-pounders, 4 long 9-pounders, 1 long 6-pounder, 16 short 32-pounders, and 3 short 12-pounders." And in this I will observe that James has departed from the figures in the official report of Captain Broke, which gives the *Shannon* only 49 guns. James says: "The *Shannon* certainly mounted 52 carriage guns," and "mounted" does not mean placed in a boat where they could not be used, had that side of the ship been engaged. As for the guns that were not "once fired" the *Chesapeake* had a whole broadside she did not fire; so did the *Shannon*, but that does not show that she did not carry those guns.

5. I do not see that Mr. Davidson, the artist, has taken any "poetical license." The only picture where two frigates are fully compared is that of the *United States* and *Macedonian*. Here the *Macedonian* is made higher out of the water because she, being relieved of the weight of masts and spars, and the consequent heeling over from pressure of sails, naturally would look higher. In this Mr. Davidson has discovered great skill.

The *Constitution* carried from ten to twelve guns on her quarter-deck, which required six ports at the most to a side; not "eight or nine," as Mr. Powell says.

6. I regret Mr. Powell refuses to believe that the *Constitution* was hulled only four times by the *Java*. Such, however, was the case. The best of the matter is, the British commanders at that time were so confident of capturing all American frigates that they took especial pains not to fire into the hull, but directed all their shot at the rigging so as to prevent the Americans from being able to make sail in escape. They did not wish to injure the hull as it would only be so much more damage for them to repair after the capture.

Professor John Frost wrote a "Book of the Navy," but I have never before known him to be quoted as an authority. I also must confess that I do not know why Captain Hull's second report was not published.

Edgar S. Maclay.

III. COMMENTS ON MR. MACLAY'S REJOINER.

DISPLACEMENT is indeed a fair comparison between ships of the same general description, and is now adopted by naval architects, officers, and government officials in every nation. The American 44's exceeded the British 38's by more than 7 per cent., nearer 12 per cent. linear dimensions (or as 174 to 154 in length), in fact more in depth, and consequently at least 40 per cent. in cubical bulk.

The complements of men afford a test of size, 470 to 300 all told.

I consider my evidence is good that English shot were most generally underweight as well as American. I have a letter from the Manager of the Carson Co., which cast shot and cannon in the war time. Sir H. Douglas's authoritative work on "Naval Gunnery" gives the exact size of English shot in 1815, and we find that after being enlarged in 1837 they still weighed rather less than nominal weight.

About the *Guerrrière's* guns I read Fenimore Cooper to mean that *perhaps* they were French, retained on board the six years. He often guardedly writes "it is said."

As the American navy consisted of so very few vessels in 1813 I see no reason to think there was the least difficulty in getting first-class seamen for the *Chesapeake*—James says boat-loads were refused. Truly the *Chesapeake* had a whole broadside that was never once fired in the engagement, but the same remark applies to the *Shannon*. Each vessel fired twenty-five guns of a side, the *Shannon* a trifle less weight of shot. The *Chesapeake* was pierced for fifty-four guns, besides chasers, according to a model, carefully made to scale, on view to this day at Greenwich (Hospital) College. There is a similar model of the *President*, also of the *Macedonian* class of frigate, etc.

I think (without referring) that Theodore Roosevelt allows the *Java* fought chiefly at rather close quarters, certainly well within range of musketry. I do not believe that she fired intentionally high, but inefficiently, from having a raw crew not trained in gunnery; most likely many shots went in the water as well as in the air. Still thirty-four men were killed or wounded on board the *Constitution*, and it is not likely many of them were aloft.

H. Y. Powell.

IV. "DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP!"

IN the article in the December CENTURY entitled "Laurels of the American Tar in 1812," in speaking of the engagement between the *Chesapeake* and the *Shannon*, the writer states that doubt has been cast upon the accuracy of the report of Captain Lawrence's last words. As bearing upon this matter I offer the following evidence.

My father, Dr. William Swift, was one of the surgeons on board the *Chesapeake*, in her engagement with the *Shannon*, and was in attendance on Captain Lawrence after he was wounded; and my mother has often heard him tell the story, and quote the last words of the dying commander: "Don't give up the ship!"

Before his death, Captain Lawrence gave his belt to Dr. Swift, who presented it to the Naval Lyceum at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, accompanied by the following memorandum:

Dr. Swift has the honor to present to the Naval Lyceum the belt worn by Captain Lawrence in the action between the United States Frigate *Chesapeake* and the British Frigate *Shannon*, on the 1st of June, 1813, and which was loosed from his waist the moment previous to his uttering the memorable words, "Don't give up the ship!"—*Naval Lyceum*, BROOKLYN, February, 4, 1834.

Dr. Swift was made a prisoner, and sent to Halifax, whence he returned home with the wounded.

In 1820 he was detached from the *Ontario* and sent as acting consul to Tunis, where he remained sixteen months. In 1836 he was on the *North Carolina* as fleet surgeon of the Pacific squadron, and on his return in 1839 was stationed at New York, Boston, and Newport for different periods. In 1862 he was at his own request placed on the retired list, having spent fifty-one years in the service of his country. He died in 1865 at the age of eighty-four.

William J. Swift, M.D.

Mr. Kennan's Reply to Certain Criticisms.

[WE presume upon the intense and continued interest in Mr. Kennan's Siberian papers which many of our readers have manifested, to make the following extracts from the preface of his forthcoming volume.—ED. C. M.]

Some of the criticisms that have been made upon the articles on Siberia and the exile system published in THE CENTURY MAGAZINE have been based apparently upon the assumption that a survey of any one particular department of national life must necessarily be incomplete and misleading, and that the fair-minded investigator should supplement it by taking into the field of vision a quantity of unrelated facts and phenomena from a dozen other departments.

"Your articles," certain critics have said, "give a false impression. Your statements with regard to Russian prisons, indiscriminate arrests, and the banishment of hundreds of people to Siberia without trial may all be true; but there are in Russia, nevertheless, thousands of peaceful, happy homes, where fathers and brothers are no more in danger of being arrested and exiled to

Siberia than they would be if they lived in the United States. Russia is not a vast prison inhabited only by suspects, convicts, and jailers; it is full of cultivated, refined, kind-hearted people; and its Emperor, who is the embodiment of all the domestic virtues, has no higher aim in life than to promote the happiness and prosperity of his beloved subjects."

The obvious reply to such criticism as this is that it wholly mistakes the aim and scope of the work criticized. I did not go to Russia to observe happy homes, nor to make the acquaintance of congenial, kind-hearted people, nor to admire the domestic virtues of the Tsar. I went to Russia to study the working of a penal system, to make the acquaintance of exiles, outcasts, and criminals, and to ascertain how the Government treats its enemies in the prisons and mines of Eastern Siberia. Granted, for the sake of argument, that there are thousands of happy homes in Russia; that the Empire *does* abound in cultivated and kind-hearted people, and that the Tsar *is* devotedly attached to his wife and children; what have these facts to do with the sanitary condition of a tumble-down *étape* in the province of Yakútsk, or with the flogging to death of a young and educated woman at the mines of Kará? The balancing of a happy and kind-hearted family in St. Petersburg against an epidemic of typhus fever in the exile forwarding-prison at Tomsk is not an evidence of fairness and impartiality, but rather an evidence of an illogical mind. All that fairness and impartiality require of the investigator in any particular field is that he shall set forth, conscientiously, in due relative proportion and without prejudice, all the significant facts that he has been able to gather in that selected field, and then that he shall draw from the collected facts such conclusions as they may seem to warrant. His work may not have the scope of an encyclopedia, but there is no reason, in the nature of things, why it should not be full, accurate, and trustworthy as far as it goes. An investigation of the Indian question in the United States would necessarily deal with a very small part of the varied and complex life of the nation; but it might, nevertheless, be made as fair and complete, within its limits, as Bryce's "American Commonwealth." It would, perhaps, present a dark picture; but to attempt to lighten it by showing that the President of the republic is a moral man and good to his children, or that there are thousands of happy families in New York that have not been driven from their homes by gold-seekers, or that the dwellers on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston are refined and cultivated people who have never made a practice of selling intoxicating liquor to minors, would be not only illogical but absurd. If the gloominess of the picture is to be relieved, the proper way to relieve it is to show what has been done to remedy the evils that make it gloomy, and not by any means to prove that in some other part of the country, under wholly different conditions, a picture might be drawn that would be cheerful and inspiring.

In the present work I have tried to present impartially both sides of every disputed question, and to deal as fairly as possible both with the Government and with the exiles. . . .

George Kennan.