

# WILLIS ABBOT

THE NAVAL HISTORY OF  
THE UNITED STATES.  
VOLUME 2

Willis Abbot

**The Naval History of the  
United States. Volume 2**

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# **Willis J. Abbot**

## **The Naval History of the United States. Volume 2**

### **PART II**

#### **CHAPTER XII**

##### **CAPTURE OF THE "SURVEYOR." – WORK OF THE GUNBOAT FLOTILLA. – OPERATIONS ON CHESAPEAKE BAY. – COCKBURN'S DEPREDACTIONS. – CRUISE OF THE "ARGUS." – HER CAPTURE BY THE "PELICAN." – BATTLE OF THE "ENTERPRISE" AND "BOXER." – END OF THE YEAR 1813 ON THE OCEAN**

With the capture of the "Chesapeake" in June, 1813, we abandoned our story of the naval events along the coast of the United States, to follow Capt. Porter and his daring seamen on their long cruise into far-off seas. But while the men of the "Essex" were capturing whalers in the Pacific, chastising insolent savages at Nookaheevah, and fighting a gallant but unsuccessful fight at Valparaiso, other blue-jackets were as gallantly serving their country nearer home. From Portsmouth to Charleston the coast was watched by British ships, and collisions between the enemies were of almost daily occurrence. In many of these actions great bravery was shown on both sides. Noticeably was this the case in the action between the cutter "Surveyor" and the British frigate "Narcissus," on the night of June 12. The "Surveyor," a little craft manned by a crew of fifteen men, and mounting six twelve-pound carronades, was lying in the York River near Chesapeake Bay. From the masthead of the "Narcissus," lying farther down the bay, the spars of the cutter could be seen above the tree-tops; and an expedition was fitted out for her capture. Fifty men, led by a veteran officer, attacked the little vessel in the darkness, but were met with a most determined resistance. The Americans could not use their carronades, but with their muskets they did much execution in the enemy's ranks. But they were finally overpowered, and the little cutter was towed down under the frigate's guns. The next day Mr. Travis, the American commander, received his sword which he had surrendered, with a letter from the British commander, in which he said, "Your gallant and desperate attempt to defend your vessel against more than double your number, on the night of the 12th inst., excited such admiration on the part of your opponents as I have seldom witnessed, and induced me to return you the sword you had so nobly used, in testimony of mine... In short, I am at a loss which to admire most, the previous arrangement on board the 'Surveyor,' or the determined manner in which her deck was disputed, inch by inch."

During the summer of 1813, the little gunboats, built in accordance with President Jefferson's plan for a coast guard of single-gun vessels, did a great deal of desultory fighting, which resulted in little or nothing. They were not very seaworthy craft, the heavy guns mounted amidships causing them to careen far over in even a sailor's "capfull" of wind. When they went into action, the first shot from the gun set the gunboat rocking so that further fire with any precision of aim was impossible. The larger gunboats carried sail enough to enable them to cruise about the coast, keeping off privateers and checking the marauding expeditions of the British. Many of the gunboats, however, were simply

large galleys propelled with oars, and therefore confined in their operations to bays and inland waters. The chief scene of their operations was Chesapeake Bay.

This noble sheet of water had been, since the very opening of the year 1813, under the control of the British, who had gathered there their most powerful vessels under the command of Admiral Cockburn, whose name gained an unenviable notoriety for the atrocities committed by his forces upon the defenceless inhabitants of the shores of Chesapeake Bay. Marauding expeditions were continually sent from the fleet to search the adjacent country for supplies. When this method of securing provisions failed, Cockburn hit upon the plan of bringing his fleet within range of a village, and then commanding the inhabitants to supply his needs, under penalty of the instant bombardment of the town in case of refusal. Sometimes this expedient failed, as when Commodore Beresford, who was blockading the Delaware, called upon the people of Dover to supply him at once with "twenty-five large bullocks and a proportionate quantity of vegetables and hay." But the sturdy inhabitants refused, mustered the militia, dragged some old cannon down to the water-side, and, for lack of cannon-balls of their own, valiantly fired back those thrown by the British, which fitted the American ordnance exactly.

Soon after this occurrence, a large party from Cockburn's fleet landed at Havre de Grace, and, having driven away the few militia, captured and burned the town. Having accomplished this exploit, the marauders continued their way up the bay, and turning up into the Sassafras River ravaged the country on both sides of the little stream. After spreading distress far and wide over the beautiful country that borders Chesapeake Bay, the vandals returned to their ships, boasting that they had despoiled the Americans of at least seventy thousand dollars, and injured them to the amount of ten times that sum.

By June, 1813, the Americans saw that something must be done to check the merciless enemy who had thus revived the cruel vandalism, which had ceased to attend civilized warfare since the middle ages. A fleet of fifteen armed galleys was fitted out to attack the frigate of Cockburn's fleet that lay nearest to Norfolk. Urged forward by long sweeps, the gunboats bore down upon the frigate, which, taken by surprise, made so feeble and irregular a response that the Americans thought they saw victory within their grasp. The gunboats chose their distance, and opened a well-directed fire upon their huge enemy, that, like a hawk attacked by a crowd of sparrows, soon turned to fly. But at this moment the wind changed, enabling two frigates which were at anchor lower down the bay to come up to the aid of their consort. The American gunboats drew off slowly, firing as they departed.

This attack infused new energy into the British, and they at once began formidable preparations for an attack upon Norfolk. On the 20th of June they moved forward to the assault, – three seventy-four-gun ships, one sixty-four, four frigates, two sloops, and three transports. They were opposed by the American forces stationed on Craney Island, which commands the entrance to Norfolk Harbor. Here the Americans had thrown up earthworks, mounting two twenty-four, one eighteen, and four six pound cannon. To work this battery, one hundred sailors from the "Constellation," together with fifty marines, had been sent ashore. A large body of militia and a few soldiers of the regular army were also in camp upon the island.

The British set the 22d as the date for the attack; and on the morning of that day, fifteen large boats, filled with sailors, marines, and soldiers to the number of seven hundred, put off from the ships, and dashed toward the batteries. At the same time a larger force tried to move forward by land, but were driven back, to wait until their comrades in the boats should have stormed and silenced the American battery. But that battery was not to be silenced. After checking the advance of the British by land, the Americans waited coolly for the column of boats to come within point-blank range. On they came, bounding over the waves, led by the great barge "Centipede," fifty feet long, and crowded with men. The blue-jackets in the shore battery stood silently at their guns. Suddenly there arose a cry, "Now, boys, are you ready?" "All ready," was the response. "Then fire!" And the great guns hurled their loads of lead and iron into the advancing boats. The volley was a fearful one; but the

British still came on doggedly, until the fire of the battery became too terrible to be endured. "The American sailors handled the great guns like rifles," said one of the British officers, speaking of the battle. Before this terrific fire, the advancing column was thrown into confusion. The boats, drifting upon each other, so crowded together that the oars-men could not make any headway. A huge round shot struck the "Centipede," passing through her diagonally, leaving death and wounds in its track. The shattered craft sunk, and was soon followed by four others. The order for retreat was given; and, leaving their dead and some wounded in the shattered barges that lay in the shallow water, the British fled to their ships. Midshipman Tatnall, who, many years later, served in the Confederate navy, waded out with several sailors, and, seizing the "Centipede," drew her ashore. He found several wounded men in her, – one a Frenchman, with both legs shot away. A small terrier dog lay whimpering in the bow. His master had brought him along for a run on shore, never once thinking of the possibility of the flower of the British navy being beaten back by the Americans.

So disastrous a defeat enraged the British, who proceeded to wreak their vengeance upon the little town of Hampton, which they sacked and burned, committing acts of shameful violence, more in accordance with the character of savages than that of civilized white men. The story of the sack of Hampton forms no part of the naval annals of the war, and in its details is too revolting to deserve a place here. It is a narrative of atrocious cruelty not to be paralleled in the history of warfare in the nineteenth century.

Leaving behind him the smoking ruins of Hampton, Cockburn with his fleet dropped down the bay, and, turning southward, cruised along the coast of the Carolinas. Anchoring off Ocracoke Inlet, the British sent a fleet of armed barges into Pamlico Sound to ravage the adjoining coast. Two privateers were found lying at anchor in the sound, – the "Anaconda" of New York, and the "Atlas" of Philadelphia. The British forces, eight hundred in number, dashed forward to capture the two vessels. The "Atlas" fell an easy prey; but the thirteen men of the "Anaconda" fought stoutly until all hope was gone, then, turning their cannon down upon the decks of their own vessel, blew great holes in her bottom, and escaped to the shore. After this skirmish, the British landed, and marched rapidly to Newbern; but, finding that place well defended by militia, made their way back to the coast, desolating the country through which they passed, and seizing cattle and slaves. The latter they are said to have sent to the West Indies and sold. From Pamlico Sound Cockburn went to Cumberland Island, where he established his winter quarters, and whence he continued to send out marauding expeditions during the rest of the year.

Very different was the character of Sir Thomas Hardy, who commanded the British blockading fleet off the New England coast. A brave and able officer, with the nature and training of a gentleman, he was as much admired by his enemies for his nobility, as Cockburn was hated for his cruelty. It is more than possible, however, that the difference between the methods of enforcement of the blockade on the New England coast and on the Southern seaboard was due to definite orders from the British admiralty: for the Southern States had entered into the war heart and soul; while New England gave to the American forces only a faint-hearted support, and cried eagerly for peace at any cost. So strong was this feeling, that resolutions of honor to the brave Capt. Lawrence were defeated in the Massachusetts Legislature, on the ground that they would encourage others to embark in the needless war in which Lawrence lost his life. Whatever may have been the cause, however, the fact remains, that Hardy's conduct while on the blockade won for him the respect and admiration of the very people against whom his forces were arrayed.

On June 18 the British blockaders off New York Harbor allowed a little vessel to escape to sea, that, before she could be captured, roamed at will within sight of the chalk cliffs of England, and inflicted immense damage upon the commerce of her enemy. This craft was the little ten-gun brig "Argus," which left New York bound for France. She carried as passenger Mr. Crawford of Georgia, who had lately been appointed United States minister to France. After safely discharging her passenger at L'Orient, the "Argus" turned into the chops of the English Channel, and cruised about,

burning and capturing many of the enemy's ships. She was in the very highway of British commerce; and her crew had little rest day or night, so plentiful were the ships that fell in their way. It was hard for the jackies to apply the torch to so many stanch vessels, that would enrich the whole crew with prize-money could they but be sent into an American port. But the little cruiser was thousands of miles from any American port, and no course was open to her save to give every prize to the flames. After cruising for a time in the English Channel, Lieut. Allen, who commanded the "Argus," took his vessel around Land's End, and into St. George's Channel and the Irish Sea. For thirty days he continued his daring operations in the very waters into which Paul Jones had carried the American flag nearly thirty-five years earlier. British merchants and shipping owners in London read with horror of the destruction wrought by this one vessel. Hardly a paper appeared without an account of some new damage done by the "Argus." Vessels were kept in port to rot at their docks, rather than fall a prey to the terrible Yankee. Rates of insurance went up to ruinous prices, and many companies refused to take any risks whatever so long as the "Argus" remained afloat. But the hue and cry was out after the little vessel; and many a stout British frigate was beating up and down in St. George's Channel, and the chops of the English Channel, in the hopes of falling in with the audacious Yankee, who had presumed to bring home to Englishmen the horrors of war.

It fell to the lot of the brig-sloop "Pelican" to rid the British waters of the "Argus." On the night of the thirteenth of August, the American vessel had fallen in with a British vessel from Oporto, and after a short chase had captured her. The usual result followed. The prisoners with their personal property were taken out of the prize, and the vessel was set afire. But, before the torch was applied, the American sailors had discovered that their prize was laden with wine; and their resolution was not equal to the task of firing the prize without testing the quality of the cargo. Besides treating themselves to rather deep potations, the boarding-crew contrived to smuggle a quantity of the wine into the forecabin of the "Argus." The prize was then fired, and the "Argus" moved away under easy sail. But the light of the blazing ship attracted the attention of the lookout on the "Pelican," and that vessel came down under full sail to discover the cause.

Day was just breaking, and by the gray morning light the British saw an American cruiser making away from the burning hulk of her last prize. The "Pelican" followed in hot pursuit, and was allowed to come alongside, although the fleet American could easily have left her far astern. But Capt. Allen was ready for the conflict; confident of his ship and of his crew, of whose half-intoxicated condition he knew nothing, he felt sure that the coming battle would only add more laurels to the many already won by the "Argus." He had often declared that the "Argus" should never run from any two-master; and now, that the gage of battle was offered, he promptly accepted.

At six o'clock in the morning, the "Pelican" came alongside, and opened the conflict with a broadside from her thirty-two pound carronades. The "Argus" replied with spirit, and a sharp cannonade began. Four minutes after the battle opened, Capt. Allen was struck by a round shot that cut off his left leg near the thigh. His officers rushed to his side, and strove to bear him to his cabin; but he resisted, saying he would stay on deck and fight his ship as long as any life was left him. With his back to a mast, he gave his orders and cheered on his men for a few minutes longer; then, fainting from the terrible gush of blood from his wound, was carried below. To lose their captain so early in the action, was enough to discourage the crew of the "Argus." Yet the officers left on duty were brave and skilful. Twice the vessel was swung into a raking position, but the gunners failed to seize the advantage. "They seemed to be nodding over their guns," said one of the officers afterward. The enemy, however, showed no signs of nodding. His fire was rapid and well directed, and his vessel manœuvred in a way that showed a practised seaman in command. At last he secured a position under the stern of the "Argus," and lay there, pouring in destructive broadsides, until the Americans struck their flag, – just forty-seven minutes after the opening of the action. The loss on the "Argus" amounted to six killed and seventeen wounded.



No action of the war was so discreditable to the Americans as this. In the loss of the "Chesapeake" and in the loss of the "Essex," there were certain features of the action that redounded greatly to the honor of the defeated party. But in the action between the "Argus" and the "Pelican," the Americans were simply outfought. The vessels were practically equal in size and armament, though the "Pelican" carried a little the heavier metal. It is also stated that the powder used by the "Argus" was bad. It had been taken from one of the prizes, and afterwards proved to be condemned powder of the British Government. In proof of the poor quality of this powder, one of the American officers states that many shot striking the side of the "Pelican" were seen to fall back into the water; while others penetrated the vessel's skin, but did no further damage. All this, however, does not alter the fact that the "Argus" was fairly beaten in a fair fight.

While the British thus snapped up an American man-of-war cruising at their harbors' mouths, the Americans were equally fortunate in capturing a British brig of fourteen guns off the coast of Maine. The captor was the United States brig "Enterprise," a lucky little vessel belonging to a very unlucky class; for her sister brigs all fell a prey to the enemy. The "Nautilus," it will be remembered, was captured early in the war. The "Vixen" fell into the hands of Sir James Yeo, who was cruising in the West Indies, in the frigate "Southampton;" but this gallant officer reaped but little benefit from his prize, for frigate and brig alike were soon after wrecked on one of the Bahama Islands. The "Siren," late in the war, was captured by the seventy-four-gun ship "Medway," and the loss of the "Argus" has just been chronicled. Of all these brigs, the "Argus" alone was able to fire a gun in her own defence, before being captured; the rest were all forced to yield quietly to immensely superior force.

In the war with Tripoli, the "Enterprise" won the reputation of being a "lucky" craft; and her daring adventures and thrilling escapes during the short naval war with France added to her prestige among sailors. When the war with England broke out, the little brig was put in commission as soon as possible, and assigned to duty along the coast of Maine. She did good service in keeping off privateers and marauding expeditions from Nova Scotia. In the early part of September, 1813, she was cruising near Penguin Point, when she sighted a brig in shore that had the appearance of a hostile war-vessel. The stranger soon settled all doubts as to her character by firing several guns, seemingly for the purpose of recalling her boats from the shore. Then, setting sail with the rapidity of a man-of-war, she bore down upon the American vessel. The "Enterprise," instead of waiting for the enemy, turned out to sea, under easy sail; and her crew were set to work bringing aft a long gun, and mounting it in the cabin, where one of the stern windows had been chopped away to make a port. This action rather alarmed the sailors, who feared that their commander, Lieut. Burrows, whose character was unknown to them, intended to avoid the enemy, and was rigging the long gun for a stern-chaser. An impromptu meeting was held upon the fore-castle; and, after much whispered consultation, the people appointed a committee to go aft and tell the commander that the lads were burning to engage the enemy, and were confident of whipping her. The committee started bravely to discharge their commission; but their courage failed them before so mighty a potentate as the commander, and they whispered their message to the first lieutenant, who laughed, and sent word forward that Mr. Burrows only wanted to get sea-room, and would soon give the jackies all the fighting they desired.

The Americans now had leisure to examine, through their marine-glasses, the vessel which was so boldly following them to the place of battle. She was a man-of-war brig, flying the British ensign from both mastheads and at the peak. Her armament consisted of twelve eighteen-pound carronades and two long sixes, as against the fourteen eighteen-pound carronades and two long nines of the "Enterprise." The Englishman carried a crew of sixty-six men, while the quarter-rolls of the American showed a total of one hundred and two. But in the battle which followed the British fought with such desperate bravery as to almost overcome the odds against them.

For some time the two vessels fought shy of each other, manœuvring for a windward position. Towards three o'clock in the afternoon, the Americans gained this advantage, and at once shortened sail, and edged down toward the enemy. As the ships drew near, a sailor was seen to climb into the

rigging of the Englishman, and nail the colors to the mast, giving the lads of the "Enterprise" a hint as to the character of the reception they might expect. As the vessels came within range, both crews cheered lustily, and continued cheering until within pistol-shot, when the two broadsides were let fly at almost exactly the same moment. With the first fire, both commanders fell. Capt. Blyth of the English vessel was almost cut in two by a round shot as he stood on his quarter-deck. He died instantly. Lieut. Burrows was struck by a canister-shot, which inflicted a mortal wound. He refused to be carried below, and was tenderly laid upon the deck, where he remained during the remainder of the battle, cheering on his men, and crying out that the colors of the "Enterprise" should never be struck. The conflict was sharp, but short. For ten minutes only the answering broadsides rung out; then the colors of the British ship were hauled down. She proved to be the sloop-of-war "Boxer," and had suffered severely from the broadsides of the "Enterprise." Several shots had taken effect in her hull, her foremast was almost shot away, and several guns were dismounted. Three men beside her captain were killed, and seventeen wounded. But she had not suffered these injuries without inflicting some in return. The "Enterprise" was much cut up aloft. Her foremast and mainmast had each been pierced by an eighteen-pound ball. Her captain lay upon the deck, gasping in the last agonies of death, but stoutly protesting that he would not be carried below until he received the sword of the commander of the "Boxer." At last this was brought him; and grasping it he cried, "Now I am satisfied. I die contented."

The two shattered brigs were taken into Portland, where the bodies of the two slain commanders were buried with all the honors of war. The "Enterprise" was repaired, and made one more cruise before the close of the war; but the "Boxer" was found to be forever ruined for a vessel of war, and she was sold into the merchant-service. The fact that she was so greatly injured in so short a time led a London paper, in speaking of the battle, to say, "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."

This battle practically closed the year's naval events upon the ocean. The British privateer "Dart" was captured near Newport by some volunteers from the gunboats stationed at that point. But, with this exception, nothing noteworthy in naval circles occurred during the remainder of the year. Looking back over the annals of the naval operations of 1813, it is clear that the Americans were the chief sufferers. They had the victories over the "Peacock," "Boxer," and "Highflyer" to boast of; but they had lost the "Chesapeake," "Argus," and "Viper." But, more than this, they had suffered their coast to be so sealed up by British blockaders that many of their best vessels were left to lie idle at their docks. The blockade, too, was growing stricter daily, and the outlook for the future seemed gloomy; yet, as it turned out, in 1814 the Americans regained the ground they had lost the year before.

## CHAPTER XIII

### **ON THE LAKES. – CLOSE OF HOSTILITIES ON LAKES ERIE AND HURON. – DESULTORY WARFARE ON LAKE ONTARIO IN 1813. – HOSTILITIES ON ONTARIO IN 1814. – THE BATTLE OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN. – END OF THE WAR UPON THE LAKES**

In considering the naval operations on the Great Lakes, it must be kept in mind, that winter, which checked but little naval activity on the ocean, locked the great fresh-water seas in an impenetrable barrier of ice, and effectually stopped all further hostilities between the hostile forces afloat. The victory gained by Commodore Perry on Lake Erie in September, 1813, gave the Americans complete command of that lake; and the frozen season soon coming on, prevented any attempts on the part of the enemy to contest the American supremacy. But, indeed, the British showed little ability, throughout the subsequent course of the war, to snatch from the Americans the fruits of the victory at Put-in-Bay. They embarked upon no more offensive expeditions; and the only notable naval contest between the two belligerents during the remainder of the war occurred Aug. 12, 1814, when a party of seventy-five British seamen and marines attempted to cut out three American schooners that lay at the foot of the lake near Fort Erie. The British forces were at Queenstown, on the Niagara River; but by dint of carrying their boats twenty miles through the woods, then poling down a narrow and shallow stream, with a second portage of eight miles, the adventurers managed to reach Lake Erie. Embarking here, they pulled down to the schooners. To the hail of the lookout, they responded, "Provision boats." And, as no British were thought to be on Lake Erie, the response satisfied the officer of the watch. He quickly discovered his mistake, however, when he saw his cable cut, and a party of armed men scrambling over his bulwarks. This first prize, the "Somers," was quickly in the hands of the British, and was soon joined in captivity by the "Ohio," whose people fought bravely but unavailingly against the unexpected foe. While the fighting was going on aboard the vessels, they were drifting down the stream; and, by the time the British victory was complete, both vessels were beyond the range of Fort Erie's guns, and safe from recapture. This successful enterprise certainly deserves a place as the boldest and best executed cutting-out expedition of the war.

Long before this occurrence, Capt. Arthur Singleton, who had succeeded to Perry's command, despairing of any active service on Lake Erie, had taken his squadron of five vessels into Lake Huron, where the British still held the supremacy. His objective point was the Island of Michilimackinac (Mackinaw), which had been captured by the enemy early in the war. On his way, he stopped and burned the British fort and barracks of St. Joseph. At Mackinaw he was repulsed, with the loss of seventy men; after which he returned to Lake Erie, leaving two vessels, the "Scorpion" and "Tigress," to blockade the Nattagawassa River. The presence of these vessels irritated the British, and they at once set about preparations for their capture. On the night of the 3d of September the "Tigress" was captured after a sharp struggle, which, as the British commanding officer said, "did credit to her officers, who were all severely wounded." At the time of the attack, the "Scorpion" was several miles away, and knew nothing of the misfortune of her consort. Knowing this, the British sent their prisoners ashore, and, hoisting the American flag over the captured vessel, waited patiently for their game to come to them. They were not disappointed in their expectations. On the 5th the "Scorpion" came up, and anchored, unsuspectingly, within two miles of her consort. At early dawn the next morning the "Tigress" weighed anchor; and, with the stars and stripes still flying, dropped down alongside the unsuspecting schooner, poured in a sudden volley, and, instantly boarding, carried the vessel without meeting any resistance.

With these two skirmishes, the war upon Lake Erie and Lake Huron was ended. But on Lake Ontario the naval events, though in no case comparable with Perry's famous victory, were numerous and noteworthy.

In our previous discussion of the progress of the war upon Lake Ontario, we left Commodore Chauncey in winter quarter at Sackett's Harbor, building new ships, and making vigorous efforts to secure sailors to man them. His energy met with its reward; for, when the melting ice left the lake open for navigation in the spring of 1813, the American fleet was ready for active service, while the best vessels belonging to the British were still in the hands of the carpenters and riggers. The first service performed by the American fleet was aiding Gen. Pike in his attack upon York, where the Americans burned an almost completed twenty-four-gun ship, and captured the ten-gun brig "Gloucester." The land forces who took part in this action were terribly injured by the explosion of the powder-magazine, to which the British had applied a slow-match when they found they could no longer hold their position. This battle was fought April 27, 1813. One month later, the naval forces co-operated with the soldiery in driving the British from Fort George, on the Canada side of the Niagara River, near Lake Ontario. Perry came from Lake Erie to take part in this action, and led a landing party under the fire of the British artillery with that dashing courage which he showed later at the battle of Put-in-Bay. The work of the sailors in this action was cool and effective. Their fire covered the advance of the troops, and silenced more than one of the enemy's guns. "The American ships," writes a British historian, "with their heavy discharges of round and grape, too well succeeded in thinning the British ranks."

But by this time the British fleet was ready for sea, and left Kingston on the 27th of May; while Chauncey was still at the extreme western end of the lake. The enemy determined to make an immediate assault upon Sackett's Harbor, and there destroy the corvette "Gen. Pike," which, if completed, would give Chauncey supremacy upon the lake. Accordingly the fleet under Sir James Lucas Yeo, with a large body of troops under Sir George Prescott, appeared before the harbor on the 29th. Although the forces which rallied to the defence of the village were chiefly raw militia, the British attack was conducted with so little spirit that the defenders won the day; and the enemy retreated, leaving most of his wounded to fall into the hands of the Americans. Yeo then returned to Kingston; and the American fleet came up the lake, and put into Sackett's Harbor, there to remain until the completion of the "Pike" should give Chauncey control of the lake. While the Americans thus remained in port, the British squadron made brief incursions into the lake, capturing a few schooners and breaking up one or two encampments of the land forces of the United States.

Not until the 21st of July did the Americans leave their anchorage. On that day, with the formidable corvette "Pike" at the head of the line, Chauncey left Sackett's Harbor, and went up to Niagara. Some days later, Yeo took his squadron to sea; and on the 7th of August the two hostile fleets came in sight of one another for the first time. Then followed a season of manœuvring, – of challenging and counter-challenging, of offering battle and of avoiding it, – terminating in so inconclusive an engagement that one is forced to believe that neither commander dared to enter the battle for which both had been so long preparing. The American squadron consisted largely of schooners armed with long guns. In smooth weather these craft were valuable adjuncts to the larger vessels, while in rough weather they were useless. Yeo's squadron was mostly square-rigged, and was therefore equally serviceable in all kinds of weather. It seems likely, therefore, that the Americans strove to bring on the conflict in smooth weather; while the British were determined to wait until a heavy sea should lessen the force of their foes. In this dilemma several days passed away.

On the night of the 7th of August the wind came up to blow, and the rising waves soon demonstrated the uselessness of schooners for purposes of war. At early dawn a fierce gust of wind caused the schooners "Hamilton" and "Scourge" to careen far to leeward. Their heavy guns broke loose; then, crashing down to the submerged beams of the schooners, pulled them still farther over; and, the water rushing in at their hatches, they foundered, carrying with them to the bottom all their

officers, and all but sixteen of the men. This loss reduced Chauncey's force to more of an equality with that of the British; yet for two days longer the manœuvring continued, without a shot being fired. On the night of the 10th the two squadrons formed in order of battle, and rapidly approached each other. At eleven o'clock a cannonade was begun by both parties, and continued for about an hour; though the shot did little material damage on either side. At midnight the British, by a quick movement, cut out and captured two American schooners, and sailed away, without suffering any damage.

A month then intervened before the next hostile meeting. In his despatches to his superior authorities, each commander stoutly affirms that he spent the time in chasing the enemy, who refused to give him battle. Whether it was the British or the Americans that avoided the battle, it is impossible to decide; but it seems reasonable to believe, that, had either party been really determined upon bringing matters to an issue, the other could have been forced into giving battle.

On the 11th of September, the enemies met near the mouth of the Genesee River, and exchanged broadsides. A few of the British vessels were hulled, and, without more ado, hauled off into the shallow waters of Ambert Bay, whither the Americans could not follow them. Then ensued another long period of peace, broken at last by a naval action in York Bay, on the 28th, in which the British were worsted and obliged to fly, though none of their ships were destroyed or captured. On Oct. 2, Chauncey accomplished a really important work, by capturing five British transports, with two hundred and sixty-four men, seven naval and ten army officers. With this achievement, the active work of the Ontario squadron ended for the year, as Chauncey remained blockading Yeo at Kingston, until the approach of winter rendered that precaution no longer necessary.

The navigable season of 1814 opened with the British first upon the lake. The long winter had been employed by the belligerents in adding to their fleets; a work completed first by Yeo, who put out upon the lake on the 3d of May, with eight square-rigged vessels, of which two were new frigates. The Americans had given up their unseaworthy schooners, and had a fleet of eight square-rigged vessels nearly ready, but still lacking the cordage and guns for the three new craft. Yeo thus had the lake to himself for a time, and began a vigorous campaign by an attack upon Oswego, aided by a large body of British troops. Succeeding in this enterprise, he set sail for Sackett's Harbor, and, taking up his position just outside the bar, disposed his vessels for a long and strict blockade. This action was particularly troublesome to the Americans at that time; for their new frigates were just ready for their guns and cables, which could not be brought overland, and the arrival of which by water was seemingly prevented by the blockade. It was in this emergency that the plan, already described, for transporting the great cable for the "Niagara" overland, on the backs of men, was decided upon. Yeo remained on guard at the mouth of the harbor until the 6th of June, then raised the blockade, and disappeared down the lake. For six weeks the Americans continued working on their fleet, to get the ships ready for service. During this time the British gunboat "Black Snake" was brought into the harbor, a prize to Lieut. Gregory, who had captured it by a sudden assault, with a score of sailors at his back. On the 1st of July, the same officer made a sudden descent upon Presque Isle, where he found a British vessel pierced for fourteen guns on the stocks, ready for launching. The raiders hastily set fire to the ship, and retreated before the enemy could get his forces together.

It was July 31 before Chauncey set sail from Sackett's Harbor. He now had under his command a squadron of eight vessels, two of which were frigates, two ship sloops-of-war, and eight brig-sloops of no mean power. Yeo had, to oppose this force, a fleet of no less respectable proportions. Yet, for the remainder of the year, these two squadrons cruised about the lake, or blockaded each other in turn, without once coming to battle. As transports, the vessels were of some service to their respective governments; but, so far as any actual naval operations were concerned, they might as well never have been built. The war closed, leaving the two cautious commanders still waiting for a satisfactory occasion for giving battle.

Such was the course of the naval war upon the Great Lakes; but the thunder of hostile cannon and the cheers of sailors were heard upon yet another sheet of fresh water, before the quarrel between

England and the United States was settled. In the north-east corner of New York State, and slightly overlapping the Canada line, lies Lake Champlain, – a picturesque sheet of water, narrow, and dotted with wooded islands. From the northern end of the lake flows the Richelieu River, which follows a straight course through Canada to the St. Lawrence, into which it empties. The long, navigable water-way thus open from Canada to the very heart of New York was to the British a most tempting path for an invading expedition. By the shore of the lake a road wound along; thus smoothing the way for a land force, whose advance might be protected by the fire of the naval force that should proceed up the lake. Naturally, so admirable an international highway early attracted the attention of the military authorities of both belligerents; and, while the British pressed forward their preparations for an invading expedition, the Americans hastened to make such arrangements as should give them control of the lake. Her European wars, however, made so great a demand for soldiers upon Great Britain, that not until 1814 could she send to America a sufficient force to undertake the invasion of the United States from the north. In the spring of that year, a force of from ten thousand to fifteen thousand troops, including several thousand veterans who had served under Wellington, were massed at Montreal; and in May a move was made by the British to get control of the lake, before sending their invading forces into New York. The British naval force already in the Richelieu River, and available for service, consisted of a brig, two sloops, and twelve or fourteen gunboats. The American flotilla included a large corvette, a schooner, a small sloop, and ten gunboats, or galleys, propelled with oars. Seeing that the British were preparing for active hostilities, the Americans began to build, with all possible speed, a large brig; a move which the enemy promptly met by pushing forward with equal energy the construction of a frigate. While the new vessels were on the stocks, an irregular warfare was carried on by those already in commission. At the opening of the season, the American vessels lay in Otter Creek; and, just as they were ready to leave port, the enemy appeared off the mouth of the creek with a force consisting of the brig "Linnet" and eight or ten galleys. The object of the British was to so obstruct the mouth of the creek that the Americans should be unable to come out. With this end in view, they had brought two sloops laden with stones, which they intended to sink in the narrow channel. But, luckily, the Americans had thrown up earthworks at the mouth of the river; and a party of sailors so worked the guns, that, after much manœuvring, the British were forced to retire without effecting their purpose.

About the middle of August, the Americans launched their new brig, the "Eagle;" and the little squadron put out at once into the lake, under command of Capt. Thomas Macdonough. Eight days later, the British got their new ship, the "Confiance," into the water. She possessed one feature new to American naval architecture, – a furnace in which to heat cannon-balls.

By this time (September, 1814), the invading column of British veterans, eleven thousand strong, had begun its march into New York along the west shore of the lake. Two thousand Americans only could be gathered to dispute their progress; and these, under the command of Brigadier-Gen. Macomb, were gathered at Plattsburg. To this point, accordingly, Macdonough took his fleet, and awaited the coming of the enemy; knowing that if he could beat back the fleet of the British, their land forces, however powerful, would be forced to cease their advance. The fleet that he commanded consisted of the flagship "Saratoga," carrying eight long twenty-four-pounders, six forty-two-pound and twelve thirty-two-pound carronades; the brig "Eagle," carrying eight long eighteens, and twelve thirty-two-pound carronades; schooner "Ticonderoga," with eight long twelve-pounders, four long eighteen-pounders, and five thirty-two-pound carronades; sloop "Preble," with seven long nines; and ten galleys. The commander who ruled over this fleet was a man still in his twenty-ninth year. The successful battles of the War of 1812 were fought by young officers, and the battle of Lake Champlain was no exception to the rule.

The British force which came into battle with Macdonough's fleet was slightly superior. It was headed by the flagship "Confiance," a frigate of the class of the United States ship "Constitution," carrying thirty long twenty-fours, a long twenty-four-pounder on a pivot, and six thirty-two or forty-

two pound carronades. The other vessels were the "Linnet," a brig mounting sixteen long twelves; and the "Chubb" and "Finch" (captured from the Americans under the names of "Growler" and "Eagle"), – sloops carrying respectively ten eighteen-pound carronades and one long six; and six eighteen-pound carronades, four long sixes, and one short eighteen. To these were added twelve gunboats, with varied armaments, but each slightly heavier than the American craft of the same class.

The 11th of September had been chosen by the British for the combined land and water attack upon Plattsburg. With the movements of the land forces, this narrative will not deal. The brunt of the conflict fell upon the naval forces, and it was the success of the Americans upon the water that turned the faces of the British invaders toward Canada.

The village of Plattsburg stands upon the shore of a broad bay which communicates with Lake Champlain by an opening a mile and a half wide, bounded upon the north by Cumberland Head, and on the south by Crab Island. In this bay, about two miles from the western shore, Macdonough's fleet lay anchored in double line, stretching north and south. The four large vessels were in the front rank, prepared to meet the brunt of the conflict; while the galleys formed a second line in the rear. The morning of the day of battle dawned clear, with a brisk north-east wind blowing. The British were stirring early, and at daybreak weighed anchor and came down the lake. Across the low-lying isthmus that connected Cumberland Head with the mainland, the Americans could see their adversaries' topmasts as they came down to do battle. At this sight, Macdonough called his officers about him, and, kneeling upon the quarter-deck, besought Divine aid in the conflict so soon to come. When the little group rose from their knees, the leading ship of the enemy was seen swinging round Cumberland Head; and the men went to their quarters to await the fiery trial that all knew was impending.

The position of the American squadron was such that the British were forced to attack "bows on," thus exposing themselves to a raking fire. By means of springs on their cables, the Americans were enabled to keep their broadsides to the enemy, and thus improve, to the fullest, the advantage gained by their position. The British came on gallantly, and were greeted by four shots from the long eighteens of the "Eagle," that had no effect. But, at the sound of the cannon, a young game-cock that was running at large on the "Saratoga" flew upon a gun, flapped his wings, and crowed thrice, with so lusty a note that he was heard far over the waters. The American seamen, thus roused from the painful revery into which the bravest fall before going into action, cheered lustily, and went into the fight, encouraged as only sailors could be by the favorable omen.

Soon after the defiant game-cock had thus cast down the gage of battle, Macdonough sighted and fired the first shot from one of the long twenty-four pounders of the "Saratoga." The heavy ball crashed into the bow of the "Confiance," and cut its way aft, killing and wounding several men, and demolishing the wheel. Nothing daunted, the British flagship came on grandly, making no reply, and seeking only to cast anchor alongside the "Saratoga," and fight it out yard-arm to yard-arm. But the fire of the Americans was such that she could not choose her distance; but after having been badly cut up, with both her port anchors shot away, was forced to anchor at a distance of a quarter of a mile. But her anchor had hardly touched bottom, when she suddenly flashed out a sheet of flames, as her rapid broadsides rung out and her red-hot shot sped over the water toward the American flagship. Her first broadside killed or wounded forty of the Americans; while many more were knocked down by the shock, but sustained no further injury. So great was the carnage, that the hatches were opened, and the dead bodies passed below, that the men might have room to work the guns. Among the slain was Mr. Gamble, the first lieutenant, who was on his knees sighting a gun, when a shot entered the port, split the quoin, drove a great piece of metal against his breast, and stretched him dead upon the deck without breaking his skin. By a singular coincidence, fifteen minutes later a shot from one of the "Saratoga's" guns struck the muzzle of a twenty-four on the "Confiance," and, dismounting it, hurled it against Capt. Downie's groin, killing him instantly without breaking the skin; a black mark about the size of a small plate was the sole visible injury.

In the mean time, the smaller vessels had become engaged, and were fighting with no less courage than the flag-ships. The "Chubb" had early been disabled by a broadside from the "Eagle," and drifted helplessly under the guns of the "Saratoga." After receiving a shot from that vessel, she struck, and was taken possession of by Midshipman Platt, who put off from the flagship in an open boat, boarded the prize, and took her into Plattsburg Bay, near the mouth of the Saranac. More than half her people were killed or wounded during the short time she was in the battle. The "Linnet," in the mean time, had engaged the "Eagle," and poured in her broadsides with such effect that the springs on the cables of the American were cut away, and she could no longer bring her broadsides to bear. Her captain therefore cut his cables, and soon gained a position from which he could bring his guns to bear upon the "Confiance." The "Linnet" thereupon dashed in among the American gunboats, and, driving them off, commenced a raking fire upon the "Saratoga." The "Finch," meanwhile, had ranged gallantly up alongside the "Ticonderoga," but was sent out of the fight by two broadsides from the American. She drifted helplessly before the wind, and soon grounded near Crab Island. On the island was a hospital, and an abandoned battery mounting one six-pound gun. Some of the convalescent patients, seeing the enemy's vessel within range, opened fire upon her from the battery, and soon forced her to haul down her flag. Nearly half her crew were killed or wounded. Almost at the same moment, the United States sloop "Preble" was forced out of the fight by the British gunboats, that pressed so fiercely upon her that she cut her cables and drifted inshore.

The "Ticonderoga" fought a gallant fight throughout. After ridding herself of the "Finch," she had a number of the British gunboats to contend with; and they pressed forward to the attack with a gallantry that showed them to be conscious of the fact, that, if this vessel could be carried, the American line would be turned, and the day won by the English. But the American schooner fought stubbornly. Her gallant commander, Lieut. Cassin, walked up and down the taffrail, heedless of the grape and musket-balls that whistled past his head, pointing out to the gunners the spot whereon to train the guns, and directing them to load with canister and bags of bullets when the enemy came too near. The gunners of the schooner were terribly hampered in their work by the lack of matches for the guns; for the vessel was new, and the absence of these very essential articles was unnoticed until too late. The guns of one division were fired throughout the fight by Hiram Paulding, a sixteen-year-old midshipman, who flashed his pistol at the priming of the guns as soon as aim was taken. When no gun was ready for his services, he rammed a ball into his weapon and discharged it at the enemy. The onslaught of the British was spirited and determined. Often they pressed up within a boat-hook's length of the schooner, only to be beaten back by her merciless fire. Sometimes so few were left alive in the galleys that they could hardly man the oars to pull out of the fight. In this way the "Ticonderoga" kept her enemies at bay while the battle was being decided between the "Saratoga" and the "Confiance."

For it was upon the issue of the conflict between these two ships, that victory or defeat depended. Each had her ally and satellite. Under the stern of the "Saratoga" lay the "Linnet," pouring in raking broadsides. The "Confiance," in turn, was suffering from the well-directed fire of the "Eagle." The roar of the artillery was unceasing, and dense clouds of gunpowder-smoke hid the warring ships from the eyes of the eager spectators on shore. The "Confiance" was unfortunate in losing her gallant captain early in the action, while Macdonough was spared to fight his ship to the end. His gallantry and activity, however, led him to expose himself fearlessly; and twice he narrowly escaped death. He worked like a common sailor, loading and firing a favorite twenty-four-pound gun; and once, while on his knees, sighting the piece, a shot from the "Confiance" cut in two the spanker-boom, a great piece of which fell heavily upon the captain's head, stretching him senseless upon the deck. He lay motionless for two or three minutes, and his men mourned him as dead; but suddenly his activity returned, and he leaped to his feet, and was soon again in the thick of the fight. In less than five minutes the cry again arose, that the captain was killed. He had been standing at the breach of his favorite cannon, when a round shot took off the head of the captain of the gun, and dashed it



with terrific force into the face of Macdonough, who was driven across the deck, and hurled against the bulwarks. He lay an instant, covered with the blood of the slain man; but, hearing his men cry that he was killed, he rushed among them, to cheer them on with his presence.

And, indeed, at this moment the crew of the "Saratoga" needed the presence of their captain to cheer them on to further exertion. The red-hot shot of the "Confiance" had twice set fire to the American ship. The raking fire from the "Linnet" had dismounted carronades and long guns one by one, until but a single serviceable gun was left in the starboard battery. A too heavy charge dismounted this piece, and threw it down the hatchway, leaving the frigate without a single gun bearing upon the enemy. In such a plight the hearts of the crew might well fail them. But Macdonough was ready for the emergency. He still had his port broadside untouched, and he at once set to work to swing the ship round so that this battery could be brought to bear. An anchor was let fall astern, and the whole ship's company hauled in on the hawser, swinging the ship slowly around. It was a dangerous manœuvre; for, as the ship veered round, her stern was presented to the "Linnet," affording an opportunity for raking, which the gunners on that plucky little vessel immediately improved. But patience and hard pulling carried the day; and gradually the heavy frigate was turned sufficiently for the after gun to bear, and a gun's crew was at once called from the hawsers to open fire. One by one the guns swung into position, and soon the whole broadside opened with a roar.

Meanwhile the "Confiance" had attempted the same manœuvre. But her anchors were badly placed; and, though her people worked gallantly, they failed to get the ship round. She bore for some time the effective fire from the "Saratoga's" fresh broadside, but, finding that she could in no way return the fire, struck her flag, two hours and a quarter after the battle commenced. Beyond giving a hasty cheer, the people of the "Saratoga" paid little attention to the surrender of their chief enemy, but instantly turned their guns upon the "Linnet." In this combat the "Eagle" could take no part, and the thunder of her guns died away. Farther down the bay, the "Ticonderoga" had just driven away the last of the British galleys; so that the "Linnet" now alone upheld the cause of the enemy. She was terribly outmatched by her heavier foe, but her gallant captain Pring kept up a desperate defence. Her masts and rigging were hopelessly shattered; and no course was open to her, save to surrender, or fight a hopeless fight. Capt. Pring sent off a lieutenant, in an open boat, to ascertain the condition of the "Confiance." The officer returned with the report that Capt. Downie was killed, and the frigate terribly cut up; and as by this time the water, pouring in the shot-holes in the "Linnet's" hull, had risen a foot above the lower deck, her flag was hauled down, and the battle ended in a decisive triumph for the Americans.

Terrible was the carnage, and many and strange the incidents, of this most stubbornly contested naval battle. All of the prizes were in a sinking condition. In the hull of the "Confiance" were a hundred and five shot-holes, while the "Saratoga" was pierced by fifty-five. Not a mast that would bear canvas was left standing in the British fleet; those of the flagship were splintered like bundles of matches, and the sails torn to rags. On most of the enemy's vessels, more than half of the crews were killed or wounded. The loss on the British side probably aggregated three hundred. Midshipman William Lee of the "Confiance" wrote home after the battle, "The havoc on both sides was dreadful. I don't think there are more than five of our men, out of three hundred, but what are killed or wounded. Never was a shower of hail so thick as the shot whistling about our ears. Were you to see my jacket, waistcoat, and trousers, you would be astonished to know how I escaped as I did; for they are literally torn all to rags with shot and splinters. The upper part of my hat was also shot away. There is one of the marines who was in the Trafalgar action with Lord Nelson, who says it was a mere flea-bite in comparison with this."

The Americans, though victorious, had suffered greatly. Their loss amounted to about two hundred men. The "Saratoga" had been cut up beyond the possibility of repair. Her decks were covered with dead and dying. The shot of the enemy wrought terrible havoc in the ranks of the American officers. Lieut. Stansbury of the "Ticonderoga" suddenly disappeared in the midst of the

action; nor could any trace of him be found, until, two days later, his body, cut nearly in two by a round shot, rose from the waters of the lake. Lieut. Vallette of the "Saratoga" was knocked down by the head of a sailor, sent flying by a cannon-ball. Some minutes later he was standing on a shot-box giving orders, when a shot took the box from beneath his feet, throwing him heavily upon the deck. Mr. Brum, the master, a veteran man-o'-war's man, was struck by a huge splinter, which knocked him down, and actually stripped every rag of clothing from his body. He was thought to be dead, but soon re-appeared at his post, with a strip of canvas about his waist, and fought bravely until the end of the action. Some days before the battle, a gentleman of Oswego gave one of the sailors a glazed tarpaulin hat, of the kind then worn by seamen. A week later the sailor re-appeared, and, handing him the hat with a semi-circular cut in the crown and brim, made while it was on his head by a cannon-shot, remarked calmly, "Look here, Mr. Sloane, how the damned John Bulls have spoiled my hat!"

The last British flag having been hauled down, an officer was sent to take possession of the "Confiance." In walking along her gun-deck, he accidentally ran against a ratline, by which one of her starboard guns was discharged. At this sound, the British galleys and gunboats, which had been lying quietly with their ensigns down, got out oars and moved off up the lake. The Americans had no vessels fit for pursuing them, and they were allowed to escape. In the afternoon the British officers came to the American flagship to complete the surrender. Macdonough met them courteously; and, on their offering their swords, put them back, saying, "Gentlemen, your gallant conduct makes you worthy to wear your weapons. Return them to their scabbards." By sundown the surrender was complete, and Macdonough sent off to the Secretary of the Navy a despatch, saying, "*Sir*,— The Almighty has been pleased to grant us a signal victory on Lake Champlain, in the capture of one frigate, one brig, and two sloops-of-war of the enemy."

Some days later, the captured ships, being beyond repair, were taken to the head of the lake, and scuttled. Some of the guns were found to be still loaded; and, in drawing the charges, one gun was found with a canvas bag containing two round shot rammed home, and wadded, without any powder; another gun contained two cartridges and no shot; and a third had a wad rammed down before the powder, thus effectually preventing the discharge of the piece. The American gunners were not altogether guiltless of carelessness of this sort. Their chief error lay in ramming down so many shot upon the powder that the force of the explosion barely carried the missiles to the enemy. In proof of this, the side of the "Confiance" was thickly dotted with round shot, which had struck into, but failed to penetrate, the wood.

The result of this victory was immediate and gratifying. The land forces of the British, thus deprived of their naval auxiliaries, turned about, and retreated to Canada, abandoning forever their projected invasion. New York was thus saved by Macdonough's skill and bravery. Yet the fame he won by his victory was not nearly proportionate to the naval ability he showed, and the service he had rendered to his country. Before the popular adulation of Perry, Macdonough sinks into second place. One historian only gives him the pre-eminence that is undoubtedly his due. Says Mr. Theodore Roosevelt, in his admirable history, "The Naval War of 1812," "But Macdonough in this battle won a higher fame than any other commander of the war, British or American. He had a decidedly superior force to contend against, and it was solely owing to his foresight and resource that we won the victory. He forced the British to engage at a disadvantage by his excellent choice of position, and he prepared beforehand for every possible contingency. His personal prowess had already been shown at the cost of the rovers of Tripoli, and in this action he helped fight the guns as ably as the best sailor. His skill, seamanship, quick eye, readiness of resource, and indomitable pluck are beyond all praise. Down to the time of the civil war, he is the greatest figure in our naval history. A thoroughly religious man, he was as generous and humane as he was skilful and brave. One of the greatest of our sea captains, he has left a stainless name behind him."

## CHAPTER XIV

### **ON THE OCEAN. – THE WORK OF THE SLOOPS-OF-WAR. – LOSS OF THE "FROLIC." – FRUITLESS CRUISE OF THE "ADAMS." – THE "PEACOCK" TAKES THE "ÉPERVIER." – THE CRUISE OF THE "WASP." – SHE CAPTURES THE "REINDEER." – SINKS THE "AVON." – MYSTERIOUS END OF THE "WASP."**

The opening of the year 1814 found the American coast still rigidly blockaded by the British men-of-war. Two or three of the enemy lay off the mouth of every considerable harbor, and were not to be driven from their post by the icy winds and storms of midwinter on the American coast. It was almost impossible for any American vessel to escape to sea, and a matter of almost equal difficulty for such vessels as were out to get into a home port. The frigate "President" had put to sea early in December, 1813, and after a cruise of eight weeks, during which the traditional ill-luck of the ship pursued her remorselessly, managed to dash into New York Harbor past the blockading squadron. At Boston the blockade was broken by the "Constitution." She left port on the 1st of January, ran off to the southward, and cruised for some weeks in the West Indies. Here she captured the British man-of-war schooner "Pictou," fourteen guns, and several merchant-vessels. She also fell in with the British thirty-six-gun frigate "Pique," which fled, and escaped pursuit by cutting through a narrow channel during a dark and squally night. The "Constitution" then returned to the coast of the United States, and narrowly escaped falling into the clutches of two British frigates. She managed to gain the shelter of Marblehead Harbor, and there remained until the latter part of the year.

But, while the larger vessels were thus accomplishing little or nothing, two or three small sloops-of-war, of a class newly built, slipped through the enemy's lines, and, gaining the open sea, fought one or two notable actions. Of these, the first vessel to get to sea was the new sloop-of-war "Frolic;" but her career was short and inglorious, for she had been at sea but a few weeks when she fell in with the enemy's frigate "Orpheus" and the schooner "Shelburne." A chase ensued, in which the American vessel threw overboard her guns and anchors, and started the water; but to no avail, for she was overhauled, and forced to surrender. Her service afloat was limited to the destruction of a Carthaginian privateer, which sunk before her guns, carrying down nearly a hundred men.

The "Adams," a vessel that had suffered many vicissitudes, – having been built for a frigate, then cut down to a sloop-of-war, and finally been sawed asunder and converted into a corvette, – put to sea on the 18th of January, under the command of Capt. Charles Morris, formerly of the "Constitution." She laid her course straight to the eastward, and for some time cruised off the western coast of Africa and the Canary Isles. She met with but little success in this region, capturing only three brigs, – the cargo of one of which consisted of wine and fruit; and the second, of palm-oil and ivory. Abandoning the African coast, the corvette turned westward along the equator, and made for the West Indies. A large Indiaman fell in her way, and was brought to; but, before the Americans could take possession of their prize, a British fleet of twenty-five sail, with two men-of-war, hove in sight, and the "Adams" was forced to seek safety in flight. She put into Savannah for provisions and water, but, hearing that the enemy was in force near by, worked out to sea, and made sail for another cruise. Capt. Morris took up a position on the limits of the Gulf Stream, near the Florida coast, in the expectation of cutting out an Indiaman from some passing convoy. The expected fleet soon came, but was under the protection of a seventy-four, two frigates, and three brigs, – a force sufficient to keep at bay the most audacious of corvettes. Morris hung about the convoy for two days, but saw no chance of eluding the watchful guards. He then crossed the Atlantic to the coast of Ireland. Here the

"Adams" narrowly escaped capture; for she was sighted by a frigate, which gave chase, and would have overhauled her, had not the Americans thrown overboard some small cannon, and cut away their anchors. Thus lightened, the corvette sped away, and soon left her pursuers behind.

Continued ill-fortune now reduced the spirits of the sailors of the "Adams" to very low ebb. They were forced to struggle unceasingly against the fierce gales which in winter sweep the Atlantic. Their stock of food and water was giving out; and, to add to their distress, scurvy, the sailors' worst enemy, began to show itself in the ship. They had boldly run into the very waters in which the "Argus" had won so rich a reward, yet not a sail gladdened the eyes of the lookout on the "Adams." It was then with great disappointment that the jackies saw the prow of the corvette turned homeward, after a cruise that would bring them neither honor nor prize-money. The passage homeward was quickly made, and on the 16th of August the vessel was in soundings off the coast of Maine. Night fell, with a dense fog concealing all landmarks from view. Through the darkness the corvette sped on at a pace of eleven miles an hour, until, just as day was breaking, the cry of "Breakers ahead!" was followed by a heavy blow, indicating that the ship had struck. The force of the blow had not been sufficient to stave in the bottom, – a fortunate fact, for the hold was full of prisoners. Nevertheless, she was hard and fast aground, on a ledge of rock that lifted her bow six feet above her stern. Morris, who had rushed upon deck at the first alarm, was unable to make out the ship's position, and feared that they were on Cashes Ledge, a reef so far from the land that it would have been impossible to save in the boats more than half the crew. He had determined, however, to instantly lower the boats and send them off in search of land, when a gust of wind, blowing away the fog, showed a beetling cliff not a hundred yards away. Rugged and inhospitable as was the coast thus exposed, it was better than an expanse of ocean; and at once Morris set to work landing his prisoners, and the sick, of whom the "Adams" had nearly sixty. With spare sails, tents were put up on the beach; and, stores having been landed, the comfort of all was assured, in case the ship should go to pieces. What the desolate shore was to which they were thus forced to turn for shelter, no one knew.

All hands now turned to at the capstan, in the hopes of getting the vessel off; and about noon, the tide having reached its flood, she gradually slid off the ledge into deep water. After trying the pumps, to see if any serious leak had been started, the difficult task of taking the ship out of the labyrinth of reefs in which she lay was begun. For more than two miles their course lay through a narrow and tortuous channel, bordered on either side with jagged reefs; but the corvette safely threaded her way between the rocks, and soon lay floating in deep water. The next morning the fog blew away; and the voyagers discovered to their astonishment that they were off Mount Desert, instead of near Portsmouth as they had expected.

To return into the cluster of reefs after the little colony of invalids and prisoners that had been left behind, would have been mere folly: so sending two fishing-boats to search out the shore party, and carry them to the nearest village, the "Adams" continued her course, intending to put into the Penobscot River. While making for this point, a sail was sighted, which proved to be the British brig-sloop "Rifleman." The corvette gave chase, but the Englishman kept well in the offing; and, as the condition of the American crew was such that to lead them into action would have been imprudent, Morris abandoned the pursuit, and, putting into the Penobscot, dropped anchor off Hampden. Here, for the present, we will leave the "Adams."

The "Peacock" – a second of the new sloops-of-war, bearing the name of a captured British vessel – put out from New York in March, and made her way to the southward, selecting as her cruising station the waters off the coast of Florida. For some time it seemed that the exertions of the sailors were to be of no avail. Not a sail was to be seen, and the chances for prize-money seemed to be small indeed. But on the 29th of March three merchant-vessels were made out in the offing; while a heavy-built, square-rigged, trim-looking craft that hovered about them was evidently a man-of-war. The strangers seemed to have sighted the American vessel; for the merchantmen were seen to hastily haul up and run off to the north-east, while the man-of-war edged away for the American ship.

The stranger was His British Majesty's brig sloop-of-war "Epervier," of eighteen guns, and carrying a crew of one hundred and twenty-eight men. The "Peacock" was a ship-sloop of twenty-two guns, with a crew of one hundred and sixty-six men. The advantage, therefore, lay with the Americans; but, in the battle that ensued, the damage they inflicted upon the enemy was out of any proportion to their excess of strength.

The two ships bore down gallantly upon each other, and at a little after ten in the morning passed, exchanging heavy broadsides. The shot of each took effect in the rigging; but the "Peacock" suffered the more, having her foreyard totally disabled, – an injury that compelled her to run large during the rest of the action, and forego all attempts at manœuvring. The two vessels having passed each other, the "Epervier" eased off, and returned to the fight, running on a parallel course with the American ship. The interchange of broadsides then became very rapid; but the British marksmanship was poor, and few of their shot took effect. The "Epervier," on the contrary, suffered severely from the American fire, which took effect in her hull, dismounting several guns, and so injuring the brig that a British naval officer, writing of the action some years later, said, "The most disgraceful part of the affair was that our ship was cut to pieces, and the enemy hardly scratched."

The injury aloft which both vessels sustained caused the battle to take on the character of an action at long range. Under such conditions, the victory was assured to the side showing the best gunnery. For a moment only did it seem that the vessels were likely to come to close quarters, and the English captain seized that occasion to call up his boarders. But they refused, saying, "She's too heavy for us." And a few minutes later the Englishman hauled down his flag, having lost nine killed or mortally wounded, and fourteen wounded. The Americans had suffered but little; only two men being injured, and these but slightly. The shot of the enemy had passed through the rigging of the "Peacock," while the "Epervier" had been hulled forty-five times.

The "Epervier" proved to be a valuable prize. In her hold specie to the amount of one hundred and eighteen thousand dollars was found; and, when the brig was sold to the United States Government, she brought fifty-five thousand dollars: so that the prize-money won by that action kept the sailors in good-humor for many months to come. But, before the prize could be safely carried into an American port, she had a gantlet to run, in which she narrowly escaped capture. After the wreck of battle had been cleared away, the brig and her captor made for Savannah, but were sighted and chased by two British frigates. The "Peacock," in the hope of drawing away the pursuers, left her prize, and headed out to sea. One frigate only followed her, and the other pressed on hotly after the "Epervier," which, to avoid capture, was forced to run into shallow water, whither the heavy frigate could not follow her. But she was not to escape so easily; for the boats of the frigate were lowered, filled with armed men, and set out in pursuit of the brig, which moved but slowly before the light breeze then blowing. The boats soon overhauled the fugitive, and escape seemed hopeless; for the "Epervier" was manned by a prize-crew of only sixteen men. But Lieut. Nicholson, who was in command, determined to try the effect of bluster. Accordingly he leaped upon the taffrail, with a speaking-trumpet in his hand, and shouted out orders as if calling a huge crew to quarters. The British, who were within easy range, stopped their advance, and, fearing a destructive broadside from the brig's guns, turned and fled precipitately. The "Epervier" continued her course, and reached Savannah in safety on the 1st of May. The "Peacock" reached the same port four days later.

At the moment when the captured "Epervier," flying the stars and stripes, was proudly making her way up the harbor of Savannah amid the plaudits of the people of the little city, there sailed from Portsmouth, N.H., a vessel that was destined to fight a good fight for the honor of that starry banner; and, after winning a glorious victory, to disappear forever from the face of the ocean, carrying to some unknown grave a crew of as brave hearts as ever beat under uniforms of navy blue.

This was the new sloop of war "Wasp," named after the gallant little craft that had been taken by the British after her capture of the "Frolic." She was a stanch three-master, carrying eleven guns to a broadside. Her crew was purely American, not a foreigner among them; but all trained seamen from

the seaboard villages and towns of New England, – the homes at that time of probably the hardest seafaring population in the world. Capt. Blakely, who commanded the vessel, had been attached to the "Enterprise" for some time, but had been ordered to the command of the "Wasp" a few days before the former vessel fought her successful battle with the "Boxer." Blakely, while in command of the "Enterprise," had greatly desired to meet an enemy worthy of his metal. Great, then, was his chagrin, when the "Enterprise," two weeks after he quitted her, fought her gallant battle. In a letter written in January, 1814, he says, "I shall ever view as one of the most unfortunate events of my life having quitted the 'Enterprise' at the moment I did. Had I remained in her a fortnight longer, my name might have been classed with those who stand so high. I cannot but consider it a mortifying circumstance that I left her but a few days before she fell in with the only enemy upon this station with which she could have creditably contended. I confess I felt heartily glad when I received my order to take command of the 'Wasp,' conceiving that there was no hope of doing any thing in the 'Enterprise.' But when I heard of the contest of the latter ship, and witnessed the great delay in the equipment of the former, I had no cause to congratulate myself. The 'Peacock' has ere this spread her plumage to the winds, and the 'Frolic' will soon take her revels on the ocean; but the 'Wasp' will, I fear, remain for some time a dull, harmless drone in the waters of her country."

Notwithstanding his impatience, Blakely was forced to endure the restraints of Portsmouth navy-yard for nearly three months, while the "Wasp" was fitting out; but when she did finally get to sea, on May 1, 1814, she proved herself to be far from a "dull, harmless drone." Slipping unobserved through the British blockading line, the "Wasp" made straight for the European coast before a fresh wind, and was soon cruising in the chops of the English channel, where the "Argus" had won her laurels and met with her defeat. Many English merchantmen were captured and burned, and the terror that spread in English shipping circles recalled the days of the "Argus."

At daylight on the 28th of June, the "Wasp" sighted two merchantmen, and straightway gave chase. Soon a third vessel was discovered on the weather-beam; and, abandoning the vessels first sighted, the American bore down upon the stranger. She proved to be the "Reindeer," a British brig-sloop of eighteen guns, carrying a crew of one hundred and eighteen men. Although the British vessel was by no means a match in weight of metal for the "Wasp," her captain, William Manners, brought her into action with a cool gallantry which well justified his reputation as one of the bravest men in the British navy.

At ten o'clock in the morning the ships were near enough to each other to exchange signals, but several hours were spent in manœuvring for the weather-gage; so that it was not until after three in the afternoon that the action fairly opened. The day was admirably suitable for a naval battle. Light clouds floated across the sky, and the gentle breeze that was blowing had sufficient strength to propel the ships without careening them. The surface of the ocean was unusually calm for that quarter, in which a rather choppy sea is usually running. Before the light breeze the "Wasp" came down upon her foe, bows on, with her decks cleared for action, and the men at their quarters. On the top-gallant forecastle of the "Reindeer" was mounted a twelve-pound carronade, and the action was opened by the discharge of this piece. In the position she then held, the "Wasp" was unable to reply; and her crew had to bear five effective shots from this gun without being able to fire a shot in return, – an ordeal that less well-disciplined crews might not have endured. For nine minutes the Americans returned not a shot; but then the "Wasp" luffed up, firing the guns from aft forward as they bore. The two ships were now lying broadside to broadside, not twenty yards apart, and every shot told. For ten minutes this position was held, and the two crews worked like Furies in loading and firing the great guns. The roar of the cannon was incessant, and the recoil of the heavy explosions deadened what little way the ships had on when fire was opened. Capt. Manners was too old an officer not to know, that, in an artillery duel of that kind, the victory would surely rest with the side that carried the heaviest guns: so he ran his vessel aboard the "Wasp" on the starboard quarter, intending to board and carry the day with the stubborn, dashing gallantry shown by British seamen when once led to an enemy's deck. At

the ringing notes of the bugle, calling up the boarders, the British gathered aft, their faces begrimed with gunpowder, their arms bare, and their keen cutlasses firmly clutched in their strong right hands. The Americans took the alarm at once, and crowded forward to repel the enemy. The marines, whose hard duty it is in long-range fighting to stand with military impassiveness, drawn up in line on deck, while the shot whistle by them, and now and then cut great gaps in their straight lines, – the marines came aft, with their muskets loaded and bayonets fixed. Before them were sailors with sharp-pointed boarding-pikes, ready to receive the enemy should he come aboard; while close under the bulwarks were grouped the boarders, ready with cutlass and pistol to beat back the flood of men that should come pouring over the side. The grating of the ships' sides told that the vessels were touching; and the next instant the burly British seamen, looming up like giants, as they dashed through the dense murkiness of the powder-smoke, were among the Americans, cutting and firing right and left. From the deck of the "Reindeer" the marines kept up a constant fire of musketry, to which the sea-soldiers of the "Wasp" responded vigorously. Marksmen posted in the tops of each vessel picked off men from their enemy's decks, choosing generally the officers.

Sharp and bloody though the British attack was, the boarders could make no way against the stubborn stand of the Americans. Capt. Manners, seeing his men beaten back, sprang forward to rally them. He was desperately wounded. A gun-shot had passed through his thighs, and a grape-shot had cut across the calves of his legs; but, maimed and bleeding to death as he was, he leaped into the rigging, and, cheering and waving his sword, called to his men to follow him to the decks of the Yankee. The Britons rallied nobly under the encouragement of their brave captain, and again advanced to the assault. But the figure of the daring officer, as he stood thus before his men, waving his sword and calling on them to come on, caught the eye of one of the men in the "Wasp's" maintop; and the next instant a ball crashed into the captain's brain, and he fell heavily to the deck, with his dying eyes turned upwards toward the flag in whose service he had given his life.

Seeing the British captain fall and the men waver, Capt. Blakely with a cheer called up the boarders of the "Wasp;" and in an instant a stream of shouting sailors, cutlass in hand, was pouring over the hammock-nettings, and driving the foe backward on his own decks. The British still fought stubbornly; but their numbers were terribly thinned, and their officers had fallen one by one, until now the captain's clerk was the highest officer left. Seeing his men falling back before the resistless torrent of boarders, this gentleman finally struck the flag; and the battle ended, twenty-seven minutes after the "Reindeer" had fired the opening gun, and eighteen after the "Wasp" had responded.

The execution and damage done on the "Reindeer" by the "Wasp's" shot were appalling. Of her crew of one hundred and eighteen men, thirty-three were killed or fatally wounded, and thirty-four were wounded. The havoc wrought among her officers has already been mentioned. Evidence of the accuracy and skill of the American gunners was to be seen in the fact that the brig was completely cut to pieces in the line of her ports. Her decks were swept clean of boats, spars, and rigging. Her masts were badly shattered, and her foremast soon went by the board. The "Wasp" had suffered severely, but was in much better condition than her captured adversary. Eleven of her crew were killed or mortally wounded, and fifteen were wounded severely or slightly. She had been hulled by six round and many grape shot, and her foremast had been cut by a twenty-four-pound shot. A few hours' work cleared from her decks all trace of the bloody fight, and she was in condition for another action. But it would have been folly to try to get the crippled "Reindeer" to port from that region, swarming with British cruisers: so Capt. Blakely took the prisoners on the "Wasp," put a few of the wounded on a neutral vessel that happened to pass, and, burning the prize, made his way to the harbor of L'Orient. He had fought a brave fight, and come out victor after a desperate contest. But, though defeated, the plucky British might well boast of the gallant manner in which they engaged an enemy so much their superior in strength. History nowhere records a more gallant death than that of the British captain, who fell leading his men in a dashing but vain attempt to retrieve the day by boarding. In its manœuvring, in

the courage and discipline of the crews, and in the gallantry of the two captains, the action of the "Wasp" and the "Reindeer" may well go down to history as a model naval duel of the age of sails.

The "Wasp" remained in port for several weeks, occupying the time in refitting, and filling the gaps in her crew by enlistment from the American privateers which then were to be seen occasionally in every port of the world. She then put out to sea, and soon fell in with a convoy of ten British merchantmen, under the protection of the seventy-four "Armada." Though he had no intention of giving battle to the line-of-battle ship, Blakely determined to capture one of the merchantmen; and to this end the "Wasp" hung upon the skirts of the convoy, making rapid dashes now at one vessel, then at another, and keeping the seventy-four in constant anxiety. Finally the swift little cruiser actually succeeded in capturing one of the vessels, and escaping before the heavy seventy-four could get to the scene of the conflict. The prize proved to be a valuable one, for she was laden with iron and brass cannon and military stores.

Towards nightfall of the same day, Sept. 1, 1814, four more sail were sighted; and the "Wasp" at once made off in chase of the most weatherly. At eight o'clock the "Wasp" had gained so rapidly upon the chase, that the latter began firing with her stern chaser, and soon after opened with one of her lee guns. All the time the enemy kept up a vigorous signalling with rockets, lanterns, and guns. By half-past nine the "Wasp" was within hailing-distance, and an officer posted on the bow hailed the stranger several times; but as she returned no satisfactory answer, and refused to heave to, the "Wasp" opened upon her with a twelve-pound carronade, and soon after poured a broadside into her quarter. The two ships ploughed through the black water, under full sail, side by side. The Americans had no idea of the identity of their assailant, but, by the flashes of the guns, could see that she was a heavy brig. Her ports gleamed brightly with battle-lanterns; and the crowds of sailors in the tops, and the regularity of her fire, showed that she was a man-of-war with a well-disciplined crew, and no mere marauding privateer. For a time this running fight continued at such short range that the only American injured was struck by a wad from the enemy's cannon. The British gunners were poor marksmen, and the "Wasp" suffered but little; but it was evident that the American fire was taking effect, for gun after gun on the enemy was silenced. At ten o'clock the Americans, receiving no response to their carronade, stopped firing; and Capt. Blakely, seizing a speaking-trumpet, shouted across the water, "Have you struck?" No answer came, and the enemy began a feeble fire. The "Wasp" let fly another broadside, and Blakely repeated the question. This time an affirmative response came through the darkness; and the "Wasp" stopped firing, and made preparations to take possession of her prize. Just as the boat was being lowered from the davits, the lookout's cry of "Sail, ho!" checked the proceedings. Through the black night a cloud of canvas could be seen far astern, denoting the presence of another ship, probably an enemy. The drums of the "Wasp" beat fiercely; and the men trooped back to their quarters, ready for a second battle. But in the mean time two more sail hove in sight, and there remained to the "Wasp" nothing but flight. She accordingly made off into the darkness, receiving one broadside from one of the newly arrived men-of-war as she departed. So suddenly was she forced to fly, that she was unable to learn the name and condition of the vessel she had forced to surrender.

It became known in the United States later that the "Wasp's" adversary in the battle in the darkness was the British sloop-of-war "Avon," of eighteen guns. She was badly cut up by the fire of the American gunners, losing her mainmast early in the action. At the time she surrendered, she was in a sinking condition; and, had it not been for the timely arrival of the brig-sloop "Castilian" and the "Tartarus," both British, the crew of the "Avon" would have been prisoners on the "Wasp," or carried to the bottom in the shattered hulk of their own ship. The loss on the "Avon" was ten killed and thirty-two wounded, while on the "Wasp" but three men were injured.

Of all this the gallant Capt. Blakely was ignorant; and, indeed, it is probable that he never knew with whom he had fought his last battle. For the subsequent history of the "Wasp" is more tragic in its unfathomable mystery than is the fate of the bravest ship ever sent to the bottom by the broadsides of an enemy. What was the end of the "Wasp," and where her bones now lie, no one knows. For



some little time after her battle with the "Avon," her movements can be traced. Sept. 12, she captured the British brig "Three Brothers," and scuttled her; two days later, the brig "Bacchus" met the same fate at her hands. Sept. 21, she took the brig "Atlanta," eight guns; and, this being a valuable prize, Midshipman Geisinger of the "Wasp" was put on board, and took her safely to Savannah. He brought the last news that was heard of the ill-fated cruiser for many years. Months passed, and lengthened into years; and still the "Wasp" came not into port, nor could any trace of her whereabouts be found. As time passed on, the attempts to account for her delay changed into theories as to the cause of her total disappearance. All sorts of rumors were afloat. According to one account, the ship was wrecked on the African coast, and her gallant lads were ending their weary lives as slaves to the turbaned Moors of Barbary. Another theory was based on the rumor that an English frigate went into Cadiz much crippled, and with her crew severely injured, and reported that she had been engaged with a heavy American corvette, which had so suddenly disappeared that she was thought to have sunk with all on board. But, as time passed on, the end of the "Wasp" was forgotten by all save a few whose hearts ached for some of the gallant lads thus blotted from the face of the earth.

Years after, the fate of the daring cruiser was again brought into remembrance by fresh news curiously found. When the officers and crew of the "Essex," after that vessel's gallant battle with the "Phœbe" and "Cherub," were sent to the United States under parole, two officers remained at Valparaiso, to give testimony before the prize-court. These gentlemen were Lieut. McKnight, and Mr. Lyman a master's mate. After going to Brazil in the "Phœbe," the two officers took passage in a Swedish brig bound for England. Months passed; and, nothing being heard from them, their friends became alarmed for their safety. In that time, before the day of the telegraph and steam transportation, many things might have easily detained the two officers for a year or more, and nothing be heard of them. But, when two years had passed, inquiries began to be made as to their fate, both by their friends and the naval authorities. The first step was to find the vessel upon which they had left Brazil. This was a work of time; so that it was many years after the disappearance of the officers when the brig was found lying at a London dock. She was the brig "Adonis," and the master proved to be the same who had commanded her when the two officers had taken passage. He readily recalled the circumstance, but claimed that the two passengers had left him in mid-ocean to go aboard an American man-of-war; and in proof of this he brought out the log-book, and, turning back to the year 1814, pointed out the following entries: —

"Aug. 23. — Left Rio de Janeiro; Stephen Decatur McKnight and James Lyman, passengers for England.

"Oct. 9. — At eight o'clock in the morning discovered a strange sail giving chase to us, and fired several guns; she gaining very fast. At half-past ten o'clock hove to, and was boarded by an officer dressed in an English doctor's uniform; the vessel also hoisted an English ensign. The officer proceeded to examine my ship's papers, etc., likewise the letter-bags, and took from one of them a letter to the victualling office, London. Finding I had two American officers as passengers, he immediately left the ship, and went on board the sloop-of-war. He shortly after returned, took the American gentlemen with him, and went a second time on board the ship. In about half an hour he returned, with Messrs. McKnight and Lyman; and they informed me that the vessel was the United States sloop-of-war 'Wasp,' commanded by Capt. Blakely, or Blake, last from France, where she had refitted; had lately sunk the 'Reindeer,' English sloop-of-war, and another vessel, which sunk without their being able to save a single person, or learn the vessel's name; that Messrs. McKnight and Lyman had now determined to leave me and go on board the 'Wasp;' paid me their passage in dollars, at 5s. 9d.; and, having taken their luggage on board, the 'Wasp' made sail to the southward. Shortly after they had left, I discovered that Lieut. McKnight had left his writing-desk behind; and I immediately made signal for the

'Wasp' to return, and stood towards her. They, observing my signal, stood back, came alongside, and sent their boat on board for the writing-desk; after which they sent me a log-line and some other presents, and made all sail in a direction for the line, and, I have reason to suppose, for the convoy that passed on Thursday previous."

And so the "Wasp," with her ill-fated crew thus re-enforced, passed forever from the sight of man. What was her course after leaving the "Adonis," none may ever know. Whether some chance spark, touching the deadly stores of her magazine, sent vessel and crew to a sudden but merciful death; or whether, after gallantly battling with some fierce tropical hurricane, she drifted about the trackless ocean a helpless hulk, with a slowly dying crew, carried hither and yon before the winds and the currents, until her timbers, rotting asunder, gave a watery sepulchre to her crew of lifeless bodies, must remain a mystery until the day when the sea shall give up its dead. But, until that day comes, the gallant deeds done by vessel and crew for the flag under which they served should keep the names of the "Wasp" and her men ever memorable in the annals of the great nation whose infancy they so gallantly protected.

## CHAPTER XV

### **OPERATIONS ON THE NEW ENGLAND COAST. – THE BOMBARDMENT OF STONINGTON. – DESTRUCTION OF THE UNITED STATES CORVETTE "ADAMS." – OPERATIONS ON CHESAPEAKE BAY. – WORK OF BARNEY'S BARGE FLOTILLA. – ADVANCE OF THE BRITISH UPON WASHINGTON. – DESTRUCTION OF THE CAPITOL. – OPERATIONS AGAINST BALTIMORE. – BOMBARDMENT OF FORT McHENRY**

The remaining work of the British blockading squadrons along the Atlantic Coast demands some attention, and some account must be given of certain land actions which were inseparably connected with the course of naval events. This narrative can well be divided into two parts, each dealing with the operations of one section of the blockading fleet; thus tracing the course of events up to the close of the war on the New England coast, before taking up the proceedings on the Chesapeake station.

It will be remembered that Decatur had been checked in his attempt to break the blockade at the eastern end of Long Island Sound, and was forced to take the frigates "United States" and "Macedonian," and the sloop-of-war "Hornet," into New London Harbor. Early in December, 1813, he determined to try to slip out; and choosing a dark night, when wind and tide were in his favor, he dropped down the bay, and was about to put to sea, when bright blue lights blazed up on either side of the harbor's mouth, and the plan was exposed by the treachery of some party never detected. After this failure, the two frigates returned up the river, where they remained until the end of the war. The "Hornet" managed to get to sea, and did good service before peace was declared.

In April, 1814, the British blockaders on the New England coast began active operations by sending an expedition up the Connecticut River to Pautopaug Point, where the invaders landed, spiked the guns of a small battery, and destroyed twenty-two vessels. Thence they proceeded down the river, burning a few more craft on the way, and escaped safely to their ships; although a party of militia, and sailors and marines from Decatur's vessels, attempted to cut them off. Shortly after this occurrence, a fleet of American gunboats attacked the blockading squadron off New London, and succeeded in inflicting serious damages upon the enemy.

In June, the enemy's depredations extended to the Massachusetts coast. The little village of Wareham was the first sufferer. A sudden descent made by boats' crews from the frigates "Superb" and "Nimrod" so completely surprised the inhabitants, that the enemy burned the shipping at the wharves, set fire to a factory, and retreated before the villagers fully comprehended the blow that had fallen upon them. Like occurrences took place at other coastwise towns; and, in every case, the militia proved powerless to check the enemy. All up and down the New England coast, from Maine to the mouth of the Connecticut River, the people were panic-stricken; and hardly a night passed without witnessing the flames of some bonfire kindled by the British out of American property.

In August, 1814, Commodore Hardy appeared off Stonington with a fleet of several vessels, headed by the seventy-four "Ramillies." Casting anchor near shore, he sent to the mayor and selectmen the following curt note: "Not wishing to destroy the unoffending inhabitants residing in the town of Stonington, one hour is granted them, from the receipt of this, to remove out of town." This message naturally caused great consternation; and, while messengers were sent in all directions to call together the militia, the answer was returned to the fleet: "We shall defend the place to the last extremity. Should it be destroyed, we will perish in its ruins." And, having thus defied the enemy, the farmers and fishermen who inhabited the town set about preparing for its defence. The one battery

available for service consisted of two eighteen-pounders and a four-pounder, mounted behind earth breastworks. The gunners were put under the command of an old sailor, who had been impressed into the British navy, where he served four years. The skill he thus acquired in gunnery, he now gladly used against his former oppressors. It was near nightfall when the British opened fire; and they kept up a constant cannonade with round shot, bombs, Congreve rockets, and carcasses until near midnight, without doing the slightest damage. The bursting shells, the fiery rockets, and the carcasses filled with flaming chemicals, fairly filled the little wooden village with fire; but the exertions of the people prevented the spread of the flames. The fleet ceased firing at midnight, but there was no peace for the villagers. Militia-men were pouring in from the country round about, laborers were at work throwing up breastwork, carriers were dashing about in search of ammunition, and all was activity, until, with the first gleam of daylight, the fire of the ships was re-opened. The Americans promptly responded, and soon two eighteen-pound shot hulled the brig "Despatch." For an hour or two a rapid fire was kept up; then, the powder giving out, the Americans spiked their largest gun, and, nailing a flag to the battery flagstaff, went in search of more ammunition. The British did not land; and the Americans, finding six kegs of powder, took the gun to a blacksmith, who drilled out the spike, and the action continued. So vigorous and well directed was the fire of the Americans, that the "Despatch" was forced to slip her cables and make off to a place of safety. That afternoon a truce was declared, which continued until eight the next morning. By that time, the Americans had assembled in sufficient force to defeat any landing party the enemy could send ashore. The bombardment of the town continued; but the aim of the British was so inconceivably poor, that, during the three days' firing, no damage was done by their shot. A more ludicrous fiasco could hardly be imagined, and the Americans were quick to see the comical side of the affair. Before departing, the British fired over fifteen tons of lead and iron into the town. A quantity of this was picked up by the Americans, and offered for sale. In a New York paper appeared the advertisement, —

"Just received, and offered for sale, about three tons of round shot, consisting of six, nine, twelve, eighteen, twenty-four, and thirty-two pounds; very handsome, being a small proportion of those which were fired from His Britannic Majesty's ships on the unoffending inhabitants of Stonington, in the recent *brilliant* attack on that place. Likewise a few carcasses, in good order, weighing about two hundred pounds each. Apply," etc.

A popular bard of the time set forth in rollicking verse the exploits of the British gunners: —

"They killed a goose, they killed a hen,  
Three hogs they wounded in a pen;  
They dashed away, — and pray what then?  
That was not taking Stonington.

"The shells were thrown, the rockets flew;  
But not a shell of all they threw —  
Though every house was full in view —  
Could burn a house in Stonington."

With this affair, in which the British expended ammunition to the amount of fifty thousand dollars, and lost twenty men killed and fifty wounded, active offensive operations along the Connecticut coast ended. Farther north, however, the British still raided towns and villages, showing more spirit in their attacks than did Hardy at Stonington. Eastport, Me., was captured in July, and converted into a veritable British colony. The inhabitants who remained in the town were forced to take an oath of allegiance to Great Britain; fortifications were thrown up, and an arsenal established;

King George's officials were placed in the custom-house, and thenceforward until the end of the war the town was virtually British. Encouraged by this success, the enemy undertook a more difficult task. A formidable fleet of men-of-war and transports, bearing almost ten thousand troops, was fitted out at Halifax for the purpose of reducing to British rule all that part of Maine lying between Passamaquoddy Bay and the Penobscot River. This expedition set sail from Halifax on the 26th of August, bound for Machias; but on the voyage down the coast of Maine the brig "Rifleman" was encountered, and from her the presence of the United States corvette "Adams" in the Penobscot River was learned. It will be remembered that the "Adams," before entering the river, had chased the British brig. Upon learning this, the British naval commander, Admiral Griffiths, pressed forward to the mouth of the Penobscot, and, anchoring there, despatched a land and naval expedition up the river for the capture of the corvette.

When the news of this advancing force reached Capt. Morris, the "Adams" was partially out of water, dismantled, and in the hands of the ship carpenters, who were repairing the injuries she had received on the rocks off Mount Desert. The ship herself was utterly defenceless, but Morris made strenuous attempts to collect a land force to defend her. He managed to rally a few hundred militia-men, who, with the sailors and marines, were routed by the enemy on the night of the 3d of September. Finding that the enemy's forces were not to be driven back by so small a body of men, Morris retreated, first setting fire to the corvette, which was totally destroyed before the British came up.

The retreating sailors were then forced to march over rugged roads to Portsmouth, N.H.; and, as walking was an exercise they were little accustomed to, many suffered severely from the unusual exertion. The difficulty of getting provisions along the road led the men to separate into several parties; but, notwithstanding the opportunities thus afforded for desertion, all who were not broken down by the long march ultimately reported for duty at the Portsmouth navy-yard.

Along the Southern seaboard the course of the war was even more disastrous to the Americans. Intelligence which reached the national authorities in the spring of 1814 led them to believe that the British were planning an expedition for the capture of Washington. Grave as was the danger, the authorities were slow to move; and though in July the Government called for fifteen thousand troops, and gave their command to Gen. Winder, yet the actual defensive force about the national capital consisted of but a few hundred militia. The naval defence was intrusted to the veteran Commodore Barney, who had served with distinction in the Revolution, and during the early years of the second war with Great Britain had commanded the Baltimore privateer "Rossie." The force put under Barney's command consisted of twenty-six gunboats and barges, manned by nine hundred men. Chiefly by his own energetic exertions, this force was ready for service in April; and by June the crews were drilled and disciplined, and the commanders schooled in the tactics of squadron evolutions. On the 1st of that month occurred the first brush with the enemy. The American flotilla was then lying in Chesapeake Bay, a little below the mouth of the Patuxent; and, a portion of the enemy's squadron coming within range, Barney ordered out his forces in chase. The British, outnumbered, fled down the bay; but, though Barney was rapidly overhauling them, he saw his hopes of victory shattered by the sudden appearance of His Britannic Majesty's seventy-four gun ship "Dragon." Thus re-enforced, it became the turn of the British to pursue; and the Americans retreated, firing constantly as they fled. The British continuing their advance, Barney was forced to take shelter in the Patuxent River; and he was gradually forced up that stream as far as the mouth of St. Leonard's Creek. The enemy then, feeling certain that the Americans were fairly entrapped, anchored at the mouth of the river, and awaited re-enforcements. These soon arrived; and on the 8th of the month the enemy's forces, consisting of a frigate, brig, and two schooners, moved up the river to the mouth of the creek. Farther they could not go, owing to shoal-water; but they fitted out a small flotilla of barges, and sent them on up the creek. With this enemy Commodore Barney was ready to come to close quarters; and he moved down upon the British, who quickly retreated to the shelter of their ships. Two or three such

sham attacks were made by the enemy, but not until the 10th of the month did they actually give battle to the Americans.

On the morning of that day the British advanced in force to the attack; and the peaceful little creek was ablaze with flags and bright uniforms, and the wooded shores echoed back the strains of martial music. Twenty-one barges, one rocket-boat, and two schooners formed the British column of attack, which moved grandly up the creek, with the bands playing patriotic airs, and the sailors, confident of victory, cheering lustily. Eight hundred men followed the British colors. Against this force Barney advanced with but five hundred sailors. His sloop and gun-vessels he left at anchor, as being too unwieldy for the narrow shoal-waters of St. Leonard's Creek; and he met the enemy's flotilla with but thirteen barges. The enemy opened the action at long range with rockets and howitzers. The former were terrible missiles in an action of this character, corresponding to the shells of modern naval warfare. Some idea of their destructiveness may be derived from the fact, that one of them, fired at long range, exploded and set fire to a boat, after having first passed through the body of one of her crew. Barney had no rockets; and, as the combat at long range was telling upon his men, he at once dashed forward into the midst of the enemy. Soon the barges were engaged in desperate hand-to-hand conflicts. The sailors, grappling with their adversary's craft, fought with pistol and cutlass across the gunwales. Barney, in a small barge with twenty men, dashed about, now striking a blow in aid of some overmatched American boat, then cheering on some laggard, or applauding some deed of gallantry that occurred in his sight. Major William Barney, son of the commodore, saw an American barge on fire, and deserted by her crew who feared the explosion of her magazine. Running his boat alongside, he jumped into the flaming craft; and by dint of bailing in water, and rocking her from side to side, he succeeded in saving the barge. For more than an hour the action raged, both sides fighting with great vigor and gallantry; but the Americans having pierced the British line, the enemy, falling into confusion, turned, and strained every muscle to gain the protection of their ship's guns. The Americans followed in hot pursuit; but their course was abruptly checked at the mouth of the creek by a British schooner, whose eighteen guns commanded respect. For a moment the pursuing barges fell back; then, choosing advantageous positions, they opened fire upon the schooner with such effect that she soon turned to escape. She succeeded in getting under the protecting guns of the frigate and sloop-of-war, but was so cut to pieces in the short action that she was run aground and abandoned. The larger vessels now opened fire upon Barney's forces; and the flotilla, after a few shots of defiance, returned to its quarters up the creek.

For the next two weeks all was quiet along the shores of the Patuxent and St. Leonard's Creek. The enemy had learned wisdom from their late defeat, and contented themselves with blockading the mouth of the creek, and leaving Barney undisturbed in his retreat. But the doughty commodore had no idea of being thus confined, and during the time of quiet made preparations for an attempt to break the blockade. Land forces from Washington were sent down to aid in this attempt; and two pieces of artillery were to be mounted on a hill at the mouth of the creek, and thence throw red-hot shot into the enemy's ships. The land forces, however, rendered not the slightest assistance; and a too cautious colonel posted the battery at such a point that no shot could reach the enemy without first passing through a hill. Accordingly, when Barney led his flotilla gallantly down to the attack, he found that the issue of the conflict rested upon the sailors alone. From the battery, which was expected to draw the enemy's fire, not a single effective shot was fired. The sailors fought nobly, using their heavy long twelves and eighteens with great effect. But they were sadly hampered by their position; for the mouth of the creek was so narrow that but eight barges could lie abreast, and the others coming down from above soon packed the little stream from shore to shore, giving the enemy a mark that the poorest gunner could hardly miss. Against the storm of grape and canister that the British poured upon them, the sailors had absolutely no protection. The barges were without bulwarks, and the blue-jackets at the guns and at the oars were exposed to the full force of the British fire. Yet in this exposed situation the gallant fellows kept up the fight for nearly an hour, only withdrawing when the last ray of hope

for help from the shore battery had vanished. Shortly after the Americans abandoned the attack, the blockading squadron got under way and stood down the bay. From the way in which one of the frigates was working her pumps, the Americans saw that their fire had not been entirely without effect.

Barney's flotilla had now given the British so much trouble that they determined to destroy it without delay; and an expedition of more than five thousand men – composed of regulars, marines, and a few negroes – was carried up the Patuxent, and landed at Benedict, where an armed brig had been stationed to cover the disembarkation. It was early dawn when the signal to land was given, and the river was covered in an instant with a well-manned and warlike flotilla. It was hard work for the British sailors, for a strong current was running; but by three o'clock in the afternoon the whole army was landed, and encamped in a strong position on a hill overlooking the village. Though no American troops were anywhere in the vicinity, the landing was conducted with the utmost caution. As the prow of each boat grated on the sand, the soldiers leaped on the beach, and instantly drew up in line, ready to repel any attack. After the infantry was landed, about a hundred artillerymen followed, and the same number of sailors dragging howitzers.

It is easily understood that this powerful force was not organized solely to destroy Barney's pitiful little flotilla. The real purpose of the British commander was to press on into the interior, and capture Washington, which the Americans had foolishly left without any defences whatever. It came to Barney's ears that Admiral Cockburn had boasted that he would destroy the American flotilla, and dine in Washington the following Sunday. This news the American commodore sent off to the authorities at the capital, and they then began to make futile preparations to repel the invader. In the mean time the British commenced their march up the shores of the Patuxent, meeting with no opposition. Barney, knowing that the defence of the national capital was of far greater importance than the fate of his flotilla, landed with four hundred men, and hastened to the American lines before Washington. He left the barges under the command of the second lieutenant, Mr. Frazier, with instructions to set fire to every boat on the appearance of the enemy, and then join the commodore with all the men left under his charge. Accordingly, when the invading column reached Nottingham, Mr. Frazier took the flotilla still higher up the creek, – a move that vastly disconcerted the British, who saw their prey eluding them. "But in the main object of our pursuit we were disappointed," wrote a British officer. "The flotilla which had been stationed opposite to Nottingham retired, on our approach, higher up the stream; and we were consequently in the situation of a huntsman who sees his hounds at fault, and has every reason to apprehend that his game will escape." But the game never fell into the hands of the ardent hunters; for the next day Mr. Frazier fulfilled his orders by setting fire to every barge, and, after seeing several of the larger boats blow up, mustered his men, and cut across the country, to join his superior officer. The British naval forces soon after reached Pig Point, the scene of this destruction, and there remained; while the land forces immediately turned away from the river, and marched upon Washington.

It is not necessary to give in detail the incidents of the series of skirmishes by which the British fought their way to the American capital. They were opposed by raw militia, and the few sailors and marines under Barney. The former fled with promptitude at the very first fire, but the sailors and marines fought gallantly. The fighting was sharpest at Bladensburg; and here Barney's blue-jackets won praise from everybody, even from the enemy whose advance they disputed. Barney himself led the Americans, and sighted a favorite gun of the sailors' battery, until he fell desperately wounded. This battery commanded the road by which the main column of British advanced; and by its hail of grape and canister it beat back the advancing regiments, and for some time checked their further progress. The British thereupon opened with rockets, and sent out sharpshooters to pick off the Yankee gunners. One of these riflemen was observed by the Americans to deliberately build for himself a small redoubt of stones from an old wall; and, lying down behind it, he began a deliberate fire upon the Americans. His first bullet went through the cap of one of the sailors, and the second sent a poor fellow to his long account. The marines answered with their muskets; but the fellow's

stone rampart saved him, and he continued his fire. Barney vowed to put an end to that affair, and, carefully sighting one of his cannon, pulled the lanyard. The heavy round shot was seen to strike the sharp-shooter's defence, and stones and man disappeared in a cloud of dust. Meantime, the enemy had thrown out flanking parties under cover of the woods, and had nearly surrounded the little band of sailors. A musket-ball struck Barney in the thigh, and he began to grow faint with loss of blood; and, finding that the militia had fled, and the sailors were becoming exhausted, the commodore ordered a retreat. The blue-jackets left the field in good order; but their gallant commander had gone but a few steps, when the pain of his wound forced him to lie down under a tree, and await the coming of the enemy. The British soon came up, led by Gen. Ross and Capt. Wainwright of the navy. After learning Barney's rank, and courteously offering to secure surgical aid, the general turned to his companion, and, speaking of the stubborn resistance made by the battery, said, "I told you it was the flotilla men." – "Yes. You were right, though I could not believe you," was the response. "They have given us the only fighting we have had."

Meanwhile, the British, having routed the Americans at every point, pressed on to Washington. The inhabitants fled before them, and the town was almost deserted when the British marched in with banners flying and bands playing. The enemy held the city for only a day; but in that time they did such deeds of vandalism, that even the people and the press of London cried out in indignation. The President's house, the Capitol, all the public buildings except the Patent Office, were burned to the ground. The navy-yard, with the uncompleted ships on the stocks, was likewise burned; but in this the enemy only acted in accordance with the rules of war. It was their destruction of the public buildings, the national archives, and the Congressional library, that aroused the wrathful indignation of all fair-minded people, whether Americans or Europeans. "Willingly," said one London newspaper, "would we throw a veil of oblivion over our transactions at Washington. The Cossacks spared Paris, but we spared not the capital of America." A second English journal fitly denounced the proceedings as "a return to the times of barbarism."

But, if the invaders are rightly to be blamed for the useless vandalism they encouraged, the American authorities are still more culpable for their neglect of the most ordinary precautions of war. That a national capital, close to the sea, should be left virtually unprotected while the enemy was massing his forces only a few miles away, seems almost unbelievable. But so it was with Washington; for five hundred flotilla men were forced to bear the brunt of the attack of five thousand British. True it is that the military authorities had massed seven thousand militia-men for the defence of the city; but such was the trepidation of these untrained soldiers, that they fled before the main body of the British had come into the fight. That the sailors and marines fought bravely, we have the testimony of the British themselves. Mr. Gleig, a subaltern in the attacking army, writes, "Of the sailors, however, it would be injustice not to speak in the terms which their conduct merits. They were employed as gunners; and not only did they serve their guns with a quickness and precision which astonished their assailants, but they stood till some of them were actually bayonneted with fuses in their hands; nor was it till their leader was wounded and taken, and they saw themselves deserted on all sides by the soldiers, that they quitted the field." Therefore, in the battle of Bladensburg, the blue-jackets won nothing but honor, though the results of the battle were so mortifying to the national pride of the people of the United States.

On the 25th of August the British left the smoking ruins of Washington behind them, and made for their fleet lying in the Patuxent. They feared that the outraged nation would rise upon them, and turn their march into a bloody retreat, like that of the British soldiery from the historic field of Lexington. Accordingly their departure was by night, immediately after a furious storm of rain and wind. Strict orders were issued to all the Americans in Washington, warning them, under penalty of death, not to leave their houses until the sun rose the next morning. Then the British stealthily marched out of the town. "No man spoke above his breath," says subaltern Gleig. "Our very steps were planted



lightly, and we cleared the town without exciting observation." A two days' march brought them to Benedict, where the fleet lay in waiting for their reception.

In the mean time, a portion of the British fleet had ascended the Potomac as far as Alexandria, and, finding that town defenceless, proceeded to dictate to the inhabitants the terms upon which they could save their village from desolation. The British demanded that all naval stores and ordnance, all the shipping and its furniture, all merchandise, and all provisions in the town should be surrendered. Several vessels had been scuttled, to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy; these, the British demanded, should be raised, repaired, and delivered to them. Time, however, did not permit the fulfilment of this condition; but to the others, harsh and humiliating though they were, the inhabitants were forced to accede. Heavy laden with the spoils of the village, the pillagers weighed anchor and started down the Potomac. But they were not destined to carry away their booty unmolested. News of the expedition reached Baltimore, and a large party of the sailors at the navy-yard were sent to the banks of the Potomac to cut off the enemy's retreat. They were officered by four men famous in American naval annals, – Perry, Rodgers, Porter, and Creighton. At Indian Head, just below Mount Vernon, the Potomac River narrows and flows swiftly between densely wooded bluffs. At this point the Americans threw up redoubts, and, mounting all the cannon that could be gathered on such short notice, prepared to dispute the enemy's passage. When the British fleet hove in sight, they were greeted with a storm of shot from the unsuspected batteries; and they recoiled in confusion. Practised American hunters lined the woody shores, and picked off the British sailors with musket-balls. For some time the fleet was thus checked in its progress. Finally the admiral determined that only by a bold dash could he escape; and accordingly, massing his vessels and concentrating his fire on the chief battery, he dashed past, and rejoined his superior officer, Cockburn, not without paying dearly for his exploit at Alexandria.

While the British were thus devastating the shores of Chesapeake Bay, they cast more than one longing look toward the thriving city of Baltimore, which, by its violent patriotism, had done much to urge on the war. From the shipyards of Baltimore came more than one stout naval vessel that had forced the enemy to haul down his colors. But that which more than any thing else aroused the hatred of the British was the share Baltimore took in fitting out and manning those swift privateers, concerning whose depredations upon British commerce we shall have something to say in a later chapter. "It is a doomed town," said Vice-admiral Warren. "The truculent inhabitants of Baltimore must be tamed with the weapons which shook the wooden turrets of Copenhagen," cried the editor of a great London paper. But, nevertheless, Baltimore did not fall before the invader, although for some time the army and navy of the enemy were united in the attempt to bring desolation upon the obnoxious city.

After the fall of Washington, the depredations of the British along the shores of Chesapeake Bay redoubled, and the marauding expeditions thus employed were really feelers thrown out to test the strength of the defenses of Baltimore. That the marauders found some opposition, is evident from a passage in the journal of a British officer. "But these hasty excursions, though generally successful, were not always performed without loss to the invaders." On one of these expeditions, Sir Peter Parker, captain of the frigate "Menelaus," lost his life. He had been ordered down to the mouth of the bay just after the fall of Washington. "I must first have a frolic with the Yankees," said he. And accordingly, after a jovial dinner aboard his frigate, he led a night expedition of sailors and marines ashore, expecting to surprise a small body of Maryland militia stationed at Moorfields. Sir Peter's frolic turned out disastrously; for the Marylanders were on the watch, and received the invaders with a fierce volley. Sir Peter was gallantly cheering on his men, when a musket-ball cut the main artery in his thigh. "They have hit me, Pearce," he said faintly to his lieutenant; "but it's nothing. Push on, my brave boys, and follow me." But even thus cheering, he fell back, the words died away in his throat, and he bled to death before a surgeon could be found. It is but right to say, that, though he sailed in Cockburn's command, he had none of the cruel brutality which his admiral too often showed.

On the 12th of September a more serious assault was made upon Baltimore. The British naval and military forces united in the attack, which was made by land and sea. A force of nine thousand men, including two thousand marines and two thousand sailors, was landed fifteen miles from Baltimore, and under the command of Gen. Ross and Admiral Cockburn marched gayly inland, never doubting that they would find the Americans unprepared, and repeat their exploits at Washington. In this expectation they were sadly disappointed; for the Maryland militia, aided by a few regulars and seamen, outfought the British at every point, and checked their farther advance. Among the slain was Gen. Ross, who was shot down as he was leading the advance of the British skirmishers. In the mean time, the British fleet had been taking its share in the engagement by attempting to reduce Fort McHenry. A large flotilla of frigates, schooners, sloops, and bomb-ketches entered the Patapsco River on the morning of the 12th, and, casting anchor out of the reach of the fort's guns, opened a furious fire. The fort was manned by militia-men and a large detachment of the gallant sailors from Barney's flotilla. When the continual falling of shells within the fort told that the enemy had come within range, the guns of Fort McHenry opened in response. But, to the intense chagrin of the Americans, it was found that their works mounted not a single gun that would carry to the enemy's fleet. There then remained to the garrison only the trying duty of holding their post, and enduring without response a galling fire from the enemy. All the garrison stood to the guns without flinching; while the shrieking shells fell on all sides, and, exploding, scattered deadly missiles in all directions. One shell struck and dismounted one of the twenty-four-pounders, killing and wounding several of its men. Admiral Cochrane, who commanded the attacking fleet, saw this incident, and ordered three of his bomb-vessels to move up nearer to the fort. This gave the Americans the opportunity for which they had been longing, and instantly every gun in the fort opened upon the three luckless ketches. Half an hour of this fire sufficed to drive the three vessels back to their original station.

Night fell, but brought no cessation of the bombardment. But the enemy, while never slackening his fire, had determined to take advantage of the darkness to send out a landing party to take two small batteries on the banks of the Patapsco, and then assault Fort McHenry from the rear. Twelve hundred and fifty men, with scaling-ladders and fascines, left the fleet in barges, and moved up the Patapsco towards Fort Covington and the City Battery. But their plan, though well laid, was defeated by the vigilance and courage of the garrisons of the two threatened positions, – sailors all, and many of them men from Barney's flotilla, a training-school which seems to have given to the region about Chesapeake Bay its most gallant defenders. Just as the storming party turned the prows of the barges towards the shore, they were discovered; and from McHenry, Covington, and the City Battery burst a thunderous artillery-fire, that shook the houses in Baltimore, and illumined the dark shores of the river with a lurid glare. Bold as the British sailors were, they could advance no farther under so terrible a fire. Two of the barges were shot to pieces, leaving their crews struggling in the water. A ceaseless hail of grape and canister spread death and wounds broadcast among the enemy; and, after wavering a moment, they turned and fled to their ships. Cochrane, seeing his plan for taking the American positions by assault thus frustrated, redoubled the fury of his fire; hoping that, when daybreak made visible the distant shore, nothing but a heap of ruins should mark the spot where Fort McHenry stood the night before.

A night bombardment is at once a beautiful and a terrible spectacle. The ceaseless flashing of the great guns, lighting up with a lurid glare the dense clouds of smoke that hang over the scene of battle; the roar of the artillery; the shriek of the shell as it leaves the cannon's mouth, slowly dying into a murmur and a dull explosion, as, with a flash of fire, the missile explodes far away, – combine to form a picture, that, despite the horrors of wounds and death, rouses the enthusiasm and admiration of the beholder. When viewed from the deck of one of an attacking fleet, the scene is even more impressive. At each discharge of the great guns, the vessel reels and trembles like a huge animal in agony. The surging waters alongside reflect in their black depths the flash of the cannon and the fiery trail of the flying shell. Far in the distance can be seen the flashes of the enemy's guns, each of which

may mean the despatch of a missile bringing death and pain in its track. One who has witnessed such a spectacle can readily understand the fascination which men find in the great game of war.

Pacing the deck of the one of the British vessels was a young American, whose temperament was such that he could fully appreciate all the beauties of the scene, even though harassed by anxious fears lest the British should be successful. This man was Francis S. Key, who had visited the fleet with a flag of truce, but was unable to get away before the bombardment began. When the sun set on the evening of the 13th, Key saw his country's flag waving proudly over the ramparts at which the British guns had been so furiously pounding. Would that flag still be there when the sun should rise again? That was the question which Key asked himself as he anxiously walked the deck throughout the night, striving to pierce the darkness, and make out, by the lurid lightnings of the cannon, whether the flag was still there. As the night wore on, Key took an old letter from his pocket, and on the blank sheet jotted down the lines of the immortal national song, "The Star Spangled Banner." Its words merely voice the writer's thoughts; for often during that night he looked anxiously shorewards, to see if

"the rockets' red glare, the bombs bursting in air,  
Gave proof, through the night, that our flag was still there."

When the anxiously awaited daylight came, Fort McHenry still stood; and over it waved defiantly the starry folds of the United States flag. The British saw that, by land and sea, their attack had failed; and early in the morning the fleet, after taking on board the remnant of the land forces, sailed suddenly away, and left Baltimore safe. They had bombarded Fort McHenry for twenty-five hours, throwing nearly two thousand shells. Yet, wonderful as it may appear, only four of the Americans were killed, and twenty-four wounded. With this failure the British ended their chief offensive operations along the shores of the Chesapeake. The greater part of the fleet and the soldiery then moved southward, to take part in the operations along the Gulf coast, that culminated in the disastrous defeat of the invaders at New Orleans.

## CHAPTER XVI

### **DESULTORY HOSTILITIES ON THE OCEAN. – ATTACK UPON FORT BOWYER. – LAFITTE THE PIRATE. – BRITISH EXPEDITION AGAINST NEW ORLEANS. – BATTLE AT THE RIGOLETS. – ATTACK ON NEW ORLEANS, AND DEFEAT OF THE BRITISH. – WORK OF THE BLUE-JACKETS. – CAPTURE OF THE FRIGATE "PRESIDENT." – THE "CONSTITUTION" TAKES THE "CYANE" AND "LEVANT." – THE "HORNET" TAKES THE "PENGUIN." – END OF THE WAR**

The naval incidents of the latter part of 1814 conferred little honor upon either of the belligerents. Seldom did the meetings between hostile ships rise to the dignity of battles. One or two small American brigs fell a prey to British frigates; but in every instance the disparity of force was so great that the weaker surrendered without striking a blow. Such was the case with the sixteen-gun brig "Rattlesnake," which escaped from one British frigate by throwing overboard all her guns, only to immediately fall a prey to the "Leander." In July of the same year, the United States brig "Siren" was captured by the British frigate "Medway," off the coast of Africa, after a long chase, during which the American hove overboard every thing movable on the brig. Not all these petty encounters ended so favorably for the enemy. Off New York a cutting-out party of volunteers surprised and captured the British tender "Eagle," a small craft carrying one thirty-two-pound howitzer, and fourteen men. Ten days later, the frigate "Tenedos," which had done such good service on the blockade, suffered the loss of her tender, which was gallantly carried away by the crew of a Yankee gunboat. Some very desperate combats between American privateers and British naval vessels were fought about this time, and will be duly noted in detail in the chapter treating of the exploits of the private armed navy.

As the autumn came on, the British naval forces began to rendezvous in the Gulf of Mexico, preparatory to the campaign before New Orleans. On Sept. 14, a squadron of four British sloops-of-war appeared off Mobile, and opened fire upon Fort Bowyer, which guarded the entrance to Mobile Bay. The attack was vigorous, and the defence determined. A British land expedition moved upon the fort from the landward side; and the little garrison found itself surrounded by enemies, many of whom were Indians, whose savage assistance the British had accepted from the very opening of the war. A small force, only, defended the fort. Percy, the British admiral, knew the weakness of the garrison; and, thinking of the ninety-two guns he could bring to bear against the twenty worked by the Americans, announced proudly, that he would give the garrison just twenty minutes to surrender. The twenty minutes passed quickly, and still the fort responded savagely to the fire of its assailants. The flag of the British ship "Hermes" was shot away; and soon after, a round shot cut her cable, and she drifted upon a sand-bank, and lay helpless, and exposed to a raking fire. Her captain, having set her afire, abandoned her; and she soon blew up. The other vessels kept up the attack gallantly for a time. The flagstaff of the fort was shot away; but the flag soon re-appeared, waving from a sponge-staff. The Americans then redoubled their fire, which soon told so severely upon the British ships that they were forced to withdraw. In the mean time, the assault of the Indians and troops had been checked, and the forces driven back in disorder, thus leaving the victory to the Americans.

It is not within the province of this work to treat of the military operations that led up to the battle of New Orleans. But the last months of 1814 witnessed a series of naval incidents trivial in themselves, but deriving importance from their connection with Gen. Jackson's great victory. Over certain incidents in the preparations of the Americans for repelling the invasion hangs a shade of romance.

To the southward of the quaint, rambling, rose-covered city of New Orleans, the tawny flood of the Mississippi winds towards the gulf in huge serpentine curves. The shores between which it flows rise scarce higher than the surface of the river itself; and a slight increase in the volume of water, or a strong wind, will serve to turn the whole region into a great, watery marsh. From the mouth of the great river, the whole coast of Louisiana, extending north and west, is a grassy sea, a vast expanse of marsh-grass, broken here and there by inlets of the Mexican Gulf, and sluggish, winding bayous that lead up into the higher lands of the State, – waterways that lead even to the back door of the Crescent City herself, but known only to oyster-gatherers, or in 1814 to the adventurous men who followed the banner of Lafitte the Baratarian pirate.

Pirate he was called then; but it is doubtful whether his misdeeds ever exceeded smuggling, or, at worst, privateering under the protecting flag of some belligerent nation. When all nations were warring, what was easier than for a few gallant fellows, with swift-sailing feluccas, to lurk about the shores of the gulf, and now under the Spanish flag, now under the French, or any colors which suited the case, sally out and capture the richly laden Indiamen that frequented those summer seas? And when a power known as the United States Government, that had its quarters more than a thousand miles from the country of the Creoles, passed an outrageous law known as the embargo, what was more natural than that the Baratarians, knowing the mysterious waterways that led up to the Crescent City, should utilize their knowledge to take ships and cargoes in and out without the formality of a custom-house examination? Such were the times that led to the formation and growth of the "piratical" colony of Barataria. Its leaders and rulers were John and Pierre Lafitte; one of whom lived in New Orleans in the character of a prosperous merchant, while the other led the expeditions which brought in merchandise to stock the former's stores. Under the influence of the warlike state of Europe, the trade of these worthies thrived, and their settlement at Grande Isle took on the appearance of a prosperous colony and naval station. Storehouses and dwellings stood close to the sea. The fertile face of the island was cut up into fruitful plantations and orange-groves. Breastworks, well dotted with the muzzles of cannon, commanded the approach by sea. More than once, from behind those ramparts, the Baratarians had proved that they could fight, and that they acknowledged the authority of no flag. The Creoles of New Orleans looked indulgently upon the conduct of the outlaws; but the few Americans in the city were highly incensed to see the authority of the United States thus set aside, and vowed that when the war was over the audacious adventurers should be crushed. However, the end came even sooner.

On the 3d of September, a British armed brig anchored near the buccaneers' retreat, and sent a flag of truce ashore. Lafitte, with great dignity, received the envoys in his tent, and assured them of his protection, though the whole village was up in arms clamoring for the death of the intruders. The British officer then announced that he had come to secure the aid of Lafitte and his followers in the campaign against New Orleans. He offered the pirate captain forgiveness for all piracies committed against the British flag, – whereat the chief smiled sardonically, – also thirty thousand dollars in cash, a captain's commission in the British navy, and lands for himself and his followers. It was a tempting bribe; for at that moment Lafitte's brother lay in the *calaboza* at New Orleans awaiting trial for piracy, and the Americans were preparing rapidly for a descent upon the Baratarian stronghold. But, little as he liked the American flag, Lafitte liked the British still less: so, asking the Englishman to wait a few days for his answer, he sent a report of the occurrence to the New Orleans authorities, and offered to co-operate with the Americans, if he could be assured of pardon for all offences committed against the government. This document caused some hesitation at New Orleans; but the military authorities determined to refuse the offer, and break up the outlaws' nest. Accordingly, a few days later, the war schooner "Carolina," six gunboats, a tender, and a launch, dropped down the Mississippi, and, rounding into the deep blue waters of the gulf, headed for Barataria. Lafitte had too many friends in New Orleans not to know of the force thus sent against him; and, when the Americans reached Grande Terre, they found the pirates at their batteries, and the Baratarian flotilla drawn up in order of

battle. The contest was sharp, but ended in the rout of the Baratarians. Their village was burned, their fortifications razed; and, when the triumphant Americans returned to New Orleans, they brought in their train ten armed prizes and a number of prisoners, although Lafitte was not to be found among the latter. Thereafter, the Baratarians, as an organization, vanished from history. Lafitte was afterwards occasionally heard of as a desperado on the more western shores of the Mexican Gulf; and it is further noticeable, that two guns were served by Baratarians under their old lieutenant, Dominique Yon, on that bloody day when Packenham's forces were beaten back on the field of Chalmette.

Early in December the movement of the British upon New Orleans took definite shape. On the 8th of that month, the calm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, off the Chandeleur Islands, were the scene of a grand rendezvous of British naval and military forces. All the vessels of Cockburn's Chesapeake fleet were there, with other men-of-war, transports, and schooners, to the number of fifty vessels. At the head was the towering two-decker "Tonnant," carrying the Admiral's flag. Frigates, corvettes, and sloops-of-war came trooping in the rear; and the transports bore seven thousand men for the capture of the Southern city. The British were in high good-humor as the anchors were let fall and the ships swung round with their heads to the tide. The voyage across the gulf from the rendezvous at Jamaica had been like a holiday trip. The weather had been fine, and the sea smooth; and the soft air of that semi-tropical region was a never-ending source of delight to sailors who had been suffering the hardships of a Northern station.

The point at which the British fleet had come to anchor lay about fifty miles due east of New Orleans. In that day of sailing-vessels, no enemy could breast the waters of the rolling Mississippi and crush the resistance of the city's defenders, as did Farragut in 1862. Knowing that they could not hope to take their ships up to the levee of the city, the enemy determined to cast anchor near the entrance of Lake Borgne, and send through a chain of lakes and bayous a mammoth expedition in barges, to a point within ten miles of the city. But this well-laid plan had been betrayed to the Americans by Lafitte; and a little band of American sailors, under the command of Lieut. Catesby Jones, had taken up a position at the Rigolets, and were prepared to dispute the farther progress of the invading forces. Five gunboats, and one hundred and eighty-five men, constituted the American force, which for a time held the British in check. Finally, the enemy, finding that the swift American cutters could easily evade the lumbering war-vessels, fitted out a fleet of forty-five barges, manned by a thousand veteran British sea-dogs, who had seen service in half a dozen naval wars. The Americans had news of the contemplated attack, and made skilful preparations to meet it. The gunboats were moored in a fore and aft line, at a point near the Rigolets. Their broadsides bore upon the enemy, and the shallowness of the water was such that by no means could they be surrounded. The sailors were prepared for a desperate conflict, and spent the night before the battle in tricing up the boarding-nettings, sharpening cutlasses, and getting small-arms in good trim. In the morning the British came on to the attack. It was a long pull from the fleet to the place of battle: so their commander brought his flotilla to anchor just out of range of the American guns; and there the grim old veterans devoured their dinners, and took their rations of grog, with appetites undisturbed by the thought of the coming conflict. Dinner over, the enemy weighed anchor, and dashed forward, with long, swift strokes, into the very flashes of the Americans' cannon. The Americans knew that their one chance of victory was to keep the overwhelming forces of their foe out of boarding distance, and they worked their guns with a rapidity born of desperation. Musket-bullets, grape-shot, and canister poured in a murderous fire upon the advancing boats. But the sturdy old British veterans knew that the best way to stop that fire was to get at the base of it; and they pressed on undauntedly, responding vigorously, meanwhile, with their bow guns. Soon they were up to the gunwales of the American flotilla, and the grappling-irons were fixed; then, with sharp blows of cutlasses, deadly play of the pikes, and a ceaseless rattle of small-arms, they poured upon the decks of the Americans. The boarding-nettings could not long check so furious a foe, and fell before the fierce slash of the cutlasses. The decks once gained, the

overpowering numbers of the Englishmen crushed all further resistance; and the flotilla was finally taken, after about one hundred of the enemy and fifty Americans had fallen.

The American flotilla being thus shattered, there remained no further obstacle to prevent the landing of the invading army. Of the advance of that brilliant body of veteran troops over sands and marshes, and through sluggish bayous and canals half-full of stagnant water, until they emerged on the bank of the river, nine miles below New Orleans, it is not my purpose to speak further. Nor does an account of Gen. Jackson's vigorous measures of defence and glorious victory come within the province of this narrative. The interesting story of Jackson's creation of an army from leather-shirted Kentucky riflemen, gay Creoles from the Creole Quarter of the Crescent City, swarthy Spaniards and mulattoes, nondescript desperadoes from the old band of Lafitte, and militia and regulars from all the Southern States, forms no part of the naval annals of the war. It is enough to say that the flower of the British army, led by a veteran of the Peninsula, recoiled before that motley crew of untrained soldiers, and were beaten back, leaving their gallant leader and thousands of their brave men dead upon the field. The navy was not without some share in this glorious triumph. On the 23d of December the schooner "Carolina" dropped down from New Orleans, and opened fire upon the enemy. "Now, then, for the honor of America, give it to them!" sung out her commander, as the first broadside was fired. The attack, unexpected as it was, created a panic in the British camp. A feeble reply was made with rockets and musketry; but even this was soon discontinued, and the enemy took refuge under the steep bank of the levee, whither the plunging shot could not follow them. All night the "Carolina" kept up her fire; and, when at daybreak she moved away, she left the camp of the enemy in confusion. During the day she renewed the attack, and persisted in her fire until the British threw up a heavy battery on the river's bank, and replied. The lads of the "Carolina" promptly accepted the challenge thus offered, and for a time a spirited combat was maintained. But the battery threw red-hot shot, and the schooner was soon set on fire and destroyed. Meanwhile the corvette "Louisiana" had come down to the scene of action, and in the subsequent engagements did some effective work. When the final onslaught of the British was made, on Jan. 7, 1815, the guns of the "Louisiana" were mounted on the opposite bank of the river, and the practised sailors worked them with deadly effect, until the flight of the American militia on that side exposed the battery to certain capture. The sailors then spiked their guns, and marched off unmolested. The sailors of the "Carolina," on that day of desperate fighting, were in the centre of Jackson's line, between the Creoles and the swarthy Baratarians under Dominique Yon. Here they worked their howitzers, and watched the scarlet lines of the enemy advance and melt away before that deadly blaze; advance and fall back again in hopeless rout. And among the many classes of fighting men whom Jackson had rallied before that British line, none did battle more valiantly for the honor of the nation and the safety of the flowery city of New Orleans than did those blue-jackets ashore.

It is a fitting commentary upon the folly of war, that the battle of New Orleans was fought after the two warring nations had signed a treaty of peace. The lives of some hundreds of brave Englishmen and Americans were needlessly sacrificed in a cause already decided. Far across the Atlantic Ocean, in the quaint old Dutch city of Ghent, representatives of England and the United States met, and, after some debate, signed the treaty on the 24th of December, 1814. But there was then no Atlantic cable, no "ocean greyhounds" to annihilate space and time; and it was months before the news of the treaty reached the scene of war. In the mean time, the hostilities were continued by land and sea.

The year 1815 found the American navy largely increased by new vessels, though the vigilance of the British blockaders kept most of these close in port. The "Constitution" was at sea, having run the blockade at Boston. In New York Harbor were the "President," "Peacock," "Hornet," and "Tom Bowline," awaiting a chance to slip out for a cruise to the East Indies. It was decided that the vessels should run out singly, and the "President" was selected to make the first attempt. The night of the 14th of January was dark and foggy, and the blockading fleet was nowhere to be seen. Then, if ever, was the time for escape; and the Yankee tars weighed anchor and started out through the Narrows.

In the impenetrable darkness of the night, baffled by head-winds and perplexing currents, the pilots lost their reckoning, and the orders to the man at the wheel were quick and nervous, until an ominous grating of the ship's keel, followed by the loss of headway, told that the frigate was aground. For a time the ship lay helpless, straining all her timbers as each wave lifted her slightly, and then let the heavy hull fall back upon the shoal. By ten o'clock the rising tide floated her off; but, on examination, Capt. Decatur found that she was seriously injured. To return to port was impossible with the wind then blowing: so all sail was crowded on, in the hopes of getting safely away before the blockading squadron should catch sight of the ship. As luck would have it, the blockaders had been forced from their posts by the gale of the day before, and the "President" had laid her course so as to infallibly fall into their clutches. Before daylight the lookout reported two sail in sight, and at daybreak the ship was fairly surrounded by the enemy's vessels. All at once gave chase to the luckless American; and a few hours were enough to show that her sailing qualities were so seriously injured by her pounding on the bar, that the enemy was rapidly overhauling her. Decatur adopted every known expedient to increase his ship's speed, but to no avail. After she had been lightened by starting the water, cutting away boats and anchors, chopping up and heaving overboard the ponderous cables, together with spars and provisions, the enemy still gained; and the foremost pursuer, a razee, opened fire. The "President" responded with her stern-chasers, but her shot had no effect. "It is said that on this occasion," writes Cooper, "the shot of the American ship were observed to be thrown with a momentum so unusually small, as to have since excited much distrust of the quality of her gunpowder. It is even added, that many of these shot were distinctly seen, when clear of the smoke, until they struck." At six o'clock in the evening, the frigate "Endymion" led the British squadron in chase, and had gained a position so close upon the American's beam that her broadsides were rapidly crippling the fugitive. Thereupon Decatur determined upon a desperate expedient, that sounds like some of his reckless exploits in the war with Tripoli. His plan was to bring the "President" about, and run boldly alongside the enemy. Every thing was to be sacrificed to the end of getting to close quarters. When once the two ships had grappled, the Americans were to board, carry the British ship in a hand-to-hand battle, and then, abandoning the crippled "President," escape in the captured frigate. So desperate a plan needed the cordial co-operation of every man: so it was first presented to the commissioned officers, who gladly embraced the desperate project. The sailors were then sent aft, and Decatur addressed them from the quarter-deck.

"My lads," said he, "that ship is coming up with us. As our ship won't sail, we'll go on board of theirs, every man and boy of us, and carry her into New York. All I ask of you is to follow me. This is a favorite ship of the country. If we allow her to be taken, we shall be deserted by our wives and sweethearts. What, let such a ship as this go for nothing! 'Twould break the heart of every pretty girl in New York."

With hearty cheers, the jackies returned to their guns. All were ready for the coming struggle. Over the main hatch was mounted a howitzer, with its black muzzle peering down into the hold, ready to scuttle the ship when the boarders should spring upon the enemy's deck. The sun, by this time, had sunk below the horizon, and the darkness of night was gathering over the ocean. The two ships surged toward each other, — great black masses, lighted up on either side by rows of open ports, through which gleamed the uncertain light of the battle-lanterns. On the gun-deck the men stood stern and silent; their thoughts fixed upon the coming battle, or perhaps wandering back to the green fields and pleasant homes they had so recently left, perhaps forever. The gray old yeoman of the frigate, with his mates, walked from gun to gun, silently placing a well-sharpened cutlass, a dirk, and a heavy leather boarding-cap at each man's side. The marines were drawn up in a line amidships; their erect, soldierly air and rigid alignment contrasting with the careless slouchiness of the sailors. Butts for the sailors' ridicule as they were during a cruise, the marines knew that, in hand-to-hand conflicts, their part was as dashing as that of their tormentors of the fore-castle.



When the "President" had come within a quarter of a mile of her adversary, Decatur perceived that his enemy was determined to decide the contest at long range. As the "President" hauled down nearer, the "Endymion" sheered off, keeping up meanwhile a vigorous cannonade. To this the Americans responded in kind; and so much superior was the gunnery of the Yankee tars, that the rigging of the enemy was seen to be fast going to pieces, while her guns were being silenced one by one. But her fire did sad havoc among the men of the "President," and particularly among the officers. The first broadside carried away Decatur's first lieutenant, Mr. Babbitt, who was struck by a thirty-two-pound shot, which cut off his right leg below the knee, and hurled him through the wardroom hatch to the deck below, fracturing his wounded leg in two places. Shortly after, Decatur was knocked to the deck by a heavy splinter. For some time he lay unconscious; then opening his eyes, and seeing a throng of anxious seamen about him, he ordered them to their stations, and resumed his duties. The fire of the "Endymion" then slackened; and she lay upon the water, with her sails cut from the yards. At that moment Lieut. Howell turned to a midshipman standing at his side, and said gayly, "Well, we have whipped that ship, at any rate." A flash from the bow of the Englishman followed; and he added, "No: there she is again." The midshipman turned to reply, and saw Howell stretched dead at his feet, killed by the last shot of the battle.

The enemy was now helpless, and it would have been easy enough for the "President" to choose her position and compel her adversary to strike; but the presence of two more Englishmen, rapidly coming up astern, forced the Americans to abandon their prey and continue their flight. It was then late in the evening, and the night was dark and starless. Every light was extinguished on the American frigate, in the hope that by so doing she might slip away under cover of the night. But the British lookouts were sharp-eyed; and by eleven o'clock two frigates had closed in on the crippled ship, and a third was rapidly coming up astern. All were pouring in rapid broadsides, and the dark waters were lighted up like a fiery sea by the ceaseless flashing of the guns. Thus surrounded and overpowered, there remained open to the Americans no course but to surrender; and at eleven o'clock at night the "President" made signal that she had struck. Her fate, like that of the "Chesapeake," had accorded with the superstitious sailors' notion that she was an unlucky ship. In the long running fight, neither the Americans nor the British had escaped without severe loss. On the "President" were twenty-four killed and fifty-six wounded; the first, second, and third lieutenants being among the slain. The "Endymion" had eleven men killed and fourteen wounded. The two frigates were ordered to proceed to Bermuda; but the "President's" bad luck seemed to follow her, for on the way she encountered a terrific gale, by which her masts were carried away, and her timbers so strained that all the upper-deck guns had to be thrown overboard to save the ship.

The loss of the "President," at the very mouth of the New York Harbor, was certainly a most inauspicious opening for the naval operations of 1815. The people of New York and Philadelphia, to whom had come neither the news of peace nor of the glorious success of the American arms at New Orleans, were plunged into despondency. "Now that Great Britain is at peace with Europe," thought they, "she can exert all her power in the task of subjugating America;" and mournful visions of a return to British rule darkened their horizon. But, even while they were thus saddened by Decatur's defeat, a gallant vessel – the monarch of the American navy – was fighting a good fight for the honor of the nation; and out of that fight she came with colors flying and two captive men-of-war following in her wake.

It will be remembered that the "Constitution" left Boston in December, 1814, for an extended cruise. The gallant frigate, always a favorite among man-o'-war's men, carried with her on this cruise a full crew of native Americans, – thorough seamen, and as plucky fighters as ever pulled a lanyard or carried a cutlass. Her course lay due east; and in January, 1815, she was in the Bay of Biscay, where she fell in with, and captured, two prizes. After this she cruised about for a month, without encountering an enemy. American privateers and cruisers had fairly driven British merchantmen from the seas, and the tars of the "Constitution" found their time hanging heavily on their hands.

The captain was an able and considerate officer, and much freedom was allowed the jackies in their amusements. With boxing, broadsword, and single-stick play, drill and skylarking, the hours of daylight were whiled away; and by night the men off duty would gather about the forecandle lantern to play with greasy, well-thumbed cards, or warble tender ditties to black-eyed Susans far across the Atlantic. Patriotic melodies formed no small part of Jack's musical *repertoire*. Of these, this one, written by a landsman, was for a long time popular among the tuneful souls of the forecandle, and was not altogether unknown in the wardroom.

"Now coil up y'r nonsense 'bout England's great navy,  
And take in y'r slack about oak-hearted tars;  
For frigates as stout, and as gallant crews have we,  
Or how came their "Macedon" decked with our stars?  
Yes, how came her "Guerriere," her "Peacock," and "Java,"  
All sent broken-ribbed to old Davy of late?  
How came it? Why, split me, than Britons we're braver;  
And that they shall feel, too, whenever we meet.  
Then charge the can cheerily,  
Send it round merrily:  
Here's to our country, and captains commanding;  
To all who inherit  
Of Lawrence the spirit  
Disdaining to strike while a stick is left standing."

Many were the verses of this notable production; for, to be popular in the forecandle, a song must play a lengthy part in "teasing time." One verse, however, is enough to show the manly, if perhaps unreasoning, pride the blue-jackets took in the triumphs of the navy.

But the time of the sailors on this closing cruise of the war was not destined to be spent in sport and singing alone. The noble frigate was not to return to the stagnation of a season of peace in port, without adding yet another honor to her already honorable record. On the morning of the 20th of February, as the ship was running aimlessly before a light wind, some inexplicable impulse led Capt. Stewart to suddenly alter his course and run off some sixty miles to the south-west. Again the "Constitution's" good luck seemed to justify the sailors' belief, for at noon she ran into a group of vessels. The first vessel was sighted on the larboard bow, and, as the frigate overhauled her, proved to be a full-rigged ship. Soon after a second sail, also a ship, was sighted; and a few minutes more sufficed to show that both were men-of-war. The one first sighted was the frigate-built corvette "Cyane," of thirty-four guns; and the second was the sloop-of-war "Levant," of twenty-one guns. For either of these vessels singly, the "Constitution," with her fifty-two guns and crew of four hundred and fifty men, was more than a match. Yet to attack the two was a bold movement, and this Stewart determined to undertake. Hardly had the character of the strangers been made out, when the corvette was seen making signals to the sloop; and the two vessels, then about ten miles apart, made all sail to get together before the enemy should overhaul them. This juncture was precisely what Stewart wished to prevent; and in a trice the shrill notes of the boatswain's whistle sent the sailors in swarms into the rigging, and the frigate was as if by magic clothed with a broad expanse of canvas. Quickly she felt the effect, and bounded through the water after the distant ships like a dolphin chasing a school of flying-fish. The old tars on the forecandle looked knowingly over the side at the foamy water rushing past, and then cast approving glances aloft where every sail was drawing. But their complacency was shattered by a loud crash aloft, which proved to be the main royal-mast which had given way under the strain. Another spar was rigged speedily, and shipped by the active tars, and soon the snowy clouds aloft showed no signs of the wreck. At sundown the three vessels were so near each other that their

colors could be seen. Stewart ran up the stars and stripes, to which the strangers responded by setting the British flag at their mastheads.

The purpose of the enemy was to delay the opening of the action until night should give him opportunity to manœuvre unobserved; but the "Constitution," suspecting this, pressed forward hotly, and opened fire a few minutes after six o'clock. By skilful seamanship Stewart kept the windward gage of both enemies; and the fight opened with the "Cyane" on the port-quarter, and the "Levant" on the port-bow of the American frigate. Fifteen minutes of fierce cannonading followed, the combatants being within musket-shot most of the time. Every gun was engaged; and the heavy broadsides shook the ships, and thundered far over the placid surface of the ocean, which was now faintly illumined by the rising moon. The triangular space between the ships was filled with the dense sulphurous smoke of the burning powder; so that the gunners could see nothing of the enemy at whom they were hurling their ponderous iron bolts. The men in the tops could now and again catch a glimpse of the top hamper of the enemy's ships, but those on the gun-deck were working almost at random. After a few minutes of rapid firing, the fire of the enemy slackened; and Stewart directed his gunners to cease until the smoke should have cleared away. At this command a silence, almost oppressive after the heavy cannonading, ensued, broken only by the occasional report of a gun from the unseen enemy, sounding like minute-guns of distress. Anxiously Stewart waited for the smoke to blow away. When it did so, the "Cyane" was seen luffing up, to come under the frigate's stern, and get in a raking broadside. The movement was discovered just in time to be checked. Stewart gave a heavy broadside to the "Levant;" then, bracing back his topsails, backed his ship down abreast of the "Cyane," pouring in rapid broadsides, before which the fire of the corvette died away. Two raking broadsides that crashed into the stern of the "Levant" sent that craft out of the action, to refit. The frigate then pressed down upon the "Cyane," and with a few heavy broadsides forced her to strike.

Capt. Douglass of the "Levant" then proved his bravery by standing by his captured consort; although he could have escaped easily, while the "Constitution" was taking possession of her prize. No thought of flight seems to have occurred to the gallant Briton, though he must have known that there was but little hope of his coming out of the combat victorious. Still he gallantly came back into the fight, meeting the "Constitution" ploughing along on the opposite tack. Broadships were exchanged at such close range that the Yankee gunners could hear the ripping of the planks on the enemy's decks as the solid shot crashed through beam and stanchion. Having passed each other, the ships wore, and returned to the attack; but the weight of the American's metal told so severely upon the "Levant" that her flag was hauled down, and, firing a gun to leeward, she gave up the fight.

As an exhibition of seamanship, this action is unrivalled in naval annals. For Stewart to have taken his ship into action with two hostile vessels, and so handle her as not only to escape being raked, but actually rake his enemies, was a triumph of nautical skill. The action was hard fought by both parties. The loss upon the British vessels has never been exactly determined; but it was undoubtedly large, for the hulls were badly cut up by the American's fire. The "Constitution" had but three men killed, and twelve wounded. The officers all escaped unhurt.

After a few hours' pause to repair damages, Stewart took his prizes into Porto Praya in the Cape Verde Islands, where they arrived on the 10th of March. The day after the ships reached port, a heavy fog settled over the water, cutting off vision in all directions. As the first lieutenant of the "Constitution" was walking the quarter-deck, he heard a young midshipman among the prisoners suddenly exclaim, "There's a large ship in the offing." The lieutenant peered about on every side, but could see nothing, until, looking upward, he saw the top-gallant sails of a large ship moving along above the fog-bank. Capt. Stewart was quickly notified; and, coolly remarking that the stranger was probably a British frigate, he ordered that the men be sent to quarters, and the ship prepared for action. The lieutenant hastened on deck to execute the orders, but had hardly reached his station when he saw the sails of two more ships gliding along above the fog-bank. Hastily he returned to the captain's cabin with the report. Stewart showed no emotion or alarm, although he knew well that the

fact that he was in a neutral port would be no protection against the British, should they once discover his presence. The affair of the "Essex" was still fresh in his mind. Calmly he ordered the lieutenant to make sail and take the ship to sea, signalling to the two prizes to follow. The orders were given quietly on deck; and in fifteen minutes the "Constitution," under full press of sail, was making her way out of Porto Praya roads. On the shore were more than a hundred prisoners whom Stewart had landed under parole. Regardless of the dictates of honor, these men rushed to a Portuguese battery, and opened fire on the ships as they passed out. Hearing the cannonade, the lookouts on the enemy's vessels looked eagerly for its cause, and caught sight, above the fog, of the rapidly receding topsails of the fugitives. At this sight the British set out in pursuit; and the fog soon clearing away revealed to the Americans two ships-of-the-line and a frigate following fast in their wake. The "Constitution" and the "Cyane" easily kept out of reach of their pursuers; but the "Levant" dropped behind, and finally, at a signal from Stewart, tacked, and stood back for Porto Praya. The enemy then abandoned the pursuit of the two foremost vessels, and followed the "Levant," but failed to overhaul her before she entered the harbor. This, however, checked the British not a whit. For the laws of nations and the authority of the Portuguese flag that floated over the little town, they cared nothing. On they came, and opened fire on the "Levant," which had dropped anchor under what was supposed to be a neutral battery. The Americans soon discovered their error. Not only did the British disregard the neutrality of the port, but the paroled prisoners on shore took possession of the battery, and opened fire upon the beleaguered craft. Thus caught between two fires, no hope remained to the Americans; and, after a few minutes' gallant but useless defence, the flag of the "Levant" was hauled down, and she passed again into the hands of the British.

It was late in May before the "Constitution" reached New York. Peace had then been declared; but none the less were Stewart and his men feasted and honored. The old frigate had won for herself a name ever to be remembered by the people of the nation, in whose service she had received and dealt so many hard knocks. "Old Ironsides," they called her; and even to-day, when a later war has given to the navy vessels whose sides are literally iron, the "Constitution" still holds her place in the hearts of the American people, who think of her lovingly by the well-won title of "Old Ironsides."

While we have been following thus Stewart and his gallant frigate in their final cruise, some smaller vessels were doing good work for the credit of the American flag. It will be remembered, that, when the "President" left New York Bay on her short and disastrous cruise of January, 1815, she left behind her, at anchor, the "Peacock," the "Hornet," and the "Tom Bowline." These vessels, knowing nothing of the fate of their former consort, awaited only the coming of a gale sufficient to drive away the blockading squadron. On the 22d of January it came up to blow; and the three craft, under storm canvas, scudded over the bar, and made for the rendezvous at Tristan d'Acunha. On the way thither they separated, the "Hornet" cruising alone. On the 23d she sighted a strange sail on the horizon, and, clapping on all sail, bore down upon her. At the same time the stranger sighted the "Hornet," and made for her, evidently with hostile intent. The two vessels approached each other until within musket-shot, when the stranger hoisted English colors, and fired a gun. Capt. Biddle of the American ship was ready for the fray, and opened fire with a broadside. The response of the enemy was vigorous and effective. For fifteen minutes the firing was constant; but the enemy, seeing that the Americans were getting the better of the fight, then strove to close and board. This Biddle determined to avoid, but called up the boarders to beat back the enemy, should they succeed in closing. "At the instant," he writes, in his official report, "every officer and man repaired to the quarter-deck, when the two vessels were coming in contact, and eagerly pressed me to permit them to board the enemy; but this I would not permit, as it was evident, from the commencement of the action, that our fire was greatly superior, both in quickness and effect. The enemy's bowsprit came between our main and mizzen rigging, on our starboard side, affording him an opportunity to board us, if such was his design; but no attempt was made. There was a considerable swell on; and, as the sea lifted us ahead, the enemy's bowsprit carried away our mizzen-shrouds, stern davits, and spanker-boom, and

he hung upon our larboard quarter. At this moment an officer called out that they had surrendered. I directed the marines and musketry men to cease firing; and while on the taffrail, asking if they had surrendered, I received a wound in the neck."

This wound, to which the captain so casually alludes, merits more than a passing reference. The fire of both ships had ceased when Biddle stepped upon the taffrail; but he had stood there only a moment, when two or three of the officers on the quarter-deck cried out that a man on the Englishman was aiming at him. Biddle did not hear the caution; but two American marines saw the enemy's movement, and, quickly bringing up their muskets, sent two balls crashing into the brain of the English marksman. He fell back dead, but had fired his piece before falling. The bullet struck Biddle in the neck, inflicting a painful, but not serious, wound. The blood flowed freely, however; and two sailors, rushing up, were about to carry their commander to the cock-pit, when he stopped them. Determined to do something to stanch the flowing blood, a sailor tore his shirt into bandages, with which he bound up his captain's wound. But let us return to Biddle's narrative.

"The enemy just then got clear of us; and his foremast and bowsprit being both gone, and perceiving us wearing to give him a fresh broadside, he again called out that he had surrendered. It was with difficulty that I could restrain my crew from firing into him again, as he had certainly fired into us after having surrendered. From the firing of the first gun, to the last time the enemy cried out that he had surrendered, was exactly twenty-two minutes by the watch. She proved to be His Britannic Majesty's brig "Penguin," mounting sixteen thirty-two-pound carronades, two long twelves, a twelve-pound carronade on the top-gallant forecastle, with a swivel on the capstan in the tops."

On boarding the prize, Biddle found that she had suffered too severely from the American fire to ever be of service again. He accordingly removed the prisoners and wounded to his own ship, and scuttled the "Penguin." Hardly was this operation accomplished, when two sail were sighted, bearing rapidly down upon the scene of action. Nothing daunted, the lads of the "Hornet" went to their guns, but were heartily glad to find that the two vessels approaching were the "Peacock" and "Tom Bowline." On their arrival, the latter vessel was converted into a cartel, and sent into Rio de Janeiro with prisoners; while the "Hornet" and "Peacock" cruised on toward the Indian Seas. On April 28 a heavy line-of-battle ship was sighted, and gave chase. In the flight the two sloops parted; the "Peacock" going off unmolested, while the "Hornet" fled, hotly pursued by the enemy. For a time it seemed as if the little craft must fall a prey to her huge pursuer, which had come up within a mile, and was firing great shot at the scudding sloop-of-war. Overboard went cables, guns, spars, shot, every thing that would lighten the "Hornet." The sails were wet down, and every thing that would draw was set. By consummate skill Biddle at last succeeded in evading his pursuer; and on the 9th of June the "Hornet" entered New York Bay, without a boat or anchor, and with but one gun left. But she brought the report that the last naval battle of the war had ended in victory for the Americans.

Meanwhile the "Peacock" was returning from a cruise not altogether void of interest. On parting with the "Hornet," she had struck off to the southward, and in the Straits of Sunda, between Borneo and Sumatra, had fallen in with the East India Company's cruiser "Nautilus," of fourteen guns. Between these two vessels an unfortunate and silly rencounter followed. The captain of the "Nautilus" knew of the declaration of peace; and, as the "Peacock" bore down upon his vessel, he shouted through a speaking-trumpet that peace had been declared. To this Capt. Warrington of the "Peacock" paid no attention, considering it a mere ruse on the part of the enemy, and responded by simply ordering the British to haul down their flag. This the Englishman very properly refused to do, and gallantly prepared for the unequal combat. Two broadsides were then interchanged, by which the "Nautilus" was severely cut up, and eight of her crew killed. She then struck her colors. Capt. Warrington, on sending a boat aboard his adversary, found that the declaration of peace was no ruse, but a truthful statement of facts. His conduct had been almost criminally headstrong; and, though he was profuse in formal apologies, the wrong done could never be righted. The "Peacock" then continued her homeward voyage.

When this vessel reached port, the last of the cruisers had returned; and the war was over in fact, as it had long been over technically. It has become the fashion to say that it was a useless war, that served no purpose, because the treaty by which it was ended contained no reference to the hateful doctrine of the right of search, which, more than any thing else, had brought on the conflict. Yet, though the conduct of the war had not led the British to formally renounce their claims in this respect, the exploits of the American navy had shown that the Yankee blue-jackets were prepared to, and would, forcibly resent any attempt on the part of the British to put those claims into practice. The British had entered upon the war gaily, never dreaming that the puny American navy would offer any serious resistance to Great Britain's domination upon the ocean. Yet now, looking back over the three years of the war, they saw an array of naval battles, in the majority of which the Americans had been victorious; and in all of which the brilliancy of American naval tactics, the skill of the officers, and the courage and discipline of the crews, put the younger combatants on a plane with the older and more famous naval service. Fenimore Cooper, in his "History of the Navy of the United States," thus sums up the results of this naval war: "The navy came out of this struggle with a vast increase of reputation. The brilliant style in which the ships had been carried into action, the steadiness and accuracy with which they had been handled, and the fatal accuracy of their fire on nearly every occasion had produced a new era in naval warfare. Most of the frigate actions had been as soon decided as circumstances would at all allow; and in no instance was it found necessary to keep up the fire of a sloop-of-war an hour, when singly engaged. Most of the combats of the latter, indeed, were decided in about half that time. The execution done in these short conflicts was often equal to that made by the largest vessels of Europe in general actions; and, in some of them, the slain and wounded comprised a very large proportion of their crews... The ablest and bravest captains of the English fleet were ready to admit that a new power was about to appear upon the ocean, and that it was not improbable the battle for the mastery of the seas would have to be fought over again."

## CHAPTER XVII

### **PRIVATEERS AND PRISONS OF THE WAR. – THE "ROSSIE." – SALEM PRIVATEERS. – THE "GEN. ARMSTRONG" GIVES BATTLE TO A BRITISH SQUADRON, AND SAVES NEW ORLEANS. – NARRATIVE OF A BRITISH OFFICER. – THE "PRINCE DE NEUFCHATEL." – EXPERIENCES OF AMERICAN PRISONERS OF WAR. – THE END**

No narrative of the naval exploits of the Americans in the second war with Great Britain can be complete without some account of the achievements of the fleets of privateers which for three years swept the seas, destroying a vast amount of the enemy's property; and, while accomplishing their end by enriching their owners, did, nevertheless, much incidental good to the American cause. Seldom has the business of privateering been so extensively carried on as in the War of 1812. For this the reason lay in the rich bait offered by the world-wide commerce of Great Britain, whose fleets whitened every known sea. Privateering must ever be a weapon wielded by the weaker nation against the stronger. And Congress, in the very Act by which it declared war, authorized the President to issue letters of marque and reprisal to private armed vessels.

The declaration of war had hardly been made public, when the hundreds of shipyards from Maine to Savannah resounded with the blows of hammers and the grating of saws, as the shipwrights worked, busily refitting old vessels, or building new ones, destined to cruise against the commerce of John Bull. All sorts of vessels were employed in this service. The Atlantic and Gulf Coasts fairly swarmed with small pilot-boats, mounting one long gun amidships, and carrying crews of twenty to forty men. These little craft made rapid sallies into the waters of the Gulf Stream, in search of British West Indiamen homeward bound. Other privateers were huge three-masters, carrying heavy batteries, and able to outsail any of the enemy's ships. On leaving port for a long cruise, these vessels would carry enormous crews, so that captured vessels might be manned and sent home. After a successful cruise, such a privateer returned to port seldom bringing more than one-fifth of the crew with which she had set out. But the favorite rig for a privateer was that of the top-sail schooner, – such a rig as the "Enterprise" carried during the war with France. The famous shipyards of Baltimore turned out scores of clean-cut, clipper-built schooners, with long, low hulls and raking masts, which straightway took to the ocean on privateering cruises. The armament of these vessels generally consisted of six to ten carronades and one long pivot-gun, going by the pet name of "Long Tom," mounted amidships. The crew was usually a choice assortment of cut-throats and seafaring vagabonds of all classes, – ready enough to fight if plunder was to be gained, but equally ready to surrender if only honor was to be gained by fighting. Yet history records a few actions in which the privateersmen showed a steadiness and courage worthy of seamen of the regular service.

The limitations of this work do not permit a complete account of the work of the privateers during the war. Although an interesting subject, and one of historical importance, but a few pages can be devoted to it here. Properly treated, it would fill a volume; and, indeed, one of the most noted privateersmen has left a narrative of the exploits of the principal privateers, which forms a very considerable tome. The fact that two hundred and fifty private armed cruisers under the American flag captured or destroyed over sixteen hundred British vessels will indicate the importance and extent of the subject. For us a mere sketch of the exploits of some of the principal privateers must suffice.

One of the first things to attract the attention of the reader, in the dingy files of some newspaper of 1812-15, is the grotesque names under which many of the privateers sailed. The grandiloquent style of the regular navy vanishes, and in its place we find homely names; such as "Jack's Favorite," "Lovely

Lass," "Row-boat," "Saucy Jack," or "True-blooded Yankee." Some names are clearly political allusions, – as the "Orders in Council" and the "Fair Trade." The "Black Joke," the "Shark," and the "Anaconda" must have had a grim significance for the luckless merchantmen who fell a prey to the vessels bearing these names. "Bunker Hill" and "Divided we fall," though odd names to sail under, seemed to bring luck to the two vessels, which were very successful in their cruises. "United we stand" was a luckless craft, however, taking only one prize; while the achievements of the "Full-blooded Yankee" and the "Sine qua non" were equally limited. Of the "Poor Sailor," certainly little was to be expected; and it is with no surprise that we find she captured only one prize.

Among the most successful privateers was the "Rossie" of Baltimore, commanded by the Revolutionary veteran Capt. Barney, who left her, finally, to assume command of the American naval forces on Chesapeake Bay. She was a clipper-built schooner, carrying fourteen guns, and a crew of one hundred and twenty men. The destruction wrought by this one cruiser was enormous. In a ninety days' cruise she captured, sunk, or otherwise destroyed British property to the amount of a million and a half dollars, and took two hundred and seventeen prisoners. All this was not done without some hard fighting. One prize – His Britannic Majesty's packet-ship "Princess Amelia" – was armed with nine-pounders, and made a gallant defence before surrendering. Several men were killed, and the "Rossie" suffered the loss of her first lieutenant. The prisoners taken by the "Rossie" were exchanged for Americans captured by the British. With the first body of prisoners thus exchanged, Barney sent a cool note to the British commander at New Brunswick, assuring him that before long a second batch of his captured countrymen should be sent in.

Several Northern seaports shared with Baltimore the business of fitting out and manning privateers. The hardy seamen of Maine and Massachusetts were ever ready for a profitable venture of this kind; and, as the continuation of the war caused the whale-fishery to languish, the sailors gladly took up the adventurous life of privateersmen. The profits of a successful cruise were enormous; and for days after the home-coming of a lucky privateer the little seaport into which she came rang with the boisterous shouts of the carousing sailors. "We still, in imagination, see our streets filled with privateersmen," writes a historian of Portsmouth, "in groups, with blue ribbons tied around their hats, inscribed in large letters, 'Success to the "Fox,"' or whatever vessel they were to sail in. And then another scene, of sailors paid off with so much money that they knew not what to do with it. It was one of these men that, in Market Square, put his arm around a cow, kissed her, and put a five-dollar bill in her mouth, for a good cud. Sometimes they might be seen, finely dressed, walking down the sunny streets, carrying parasols." One Portsmouth privateer came to grief in the West Indies, and was captured by a British vessel of heavier metal. In the hold of the privateer was a considerable sum of money in gold coin, the existence of which was known only to the captain and his body-servant, a bright negro. The British, on capturing the vessel, put a prize-crew on board, and, while taking the Yankee captain upon their own ship, left his negro servant on the prize. Watching his opportunity, the negro brought up the gold coin, and dropped it unobserved into a tub of greasy black slush with which he had been slushing down the masts. Some days later, the captured vessel reached the port to which she had been sent, and was tied up at a wharf to await condemnation. The faithful servant lingered about the ship for a time, saying that he had no place to go. At last he was gruffly ordered to leave; but, before going, he astonished the mate by begging for the tub of slush, which he said might enable him to earn a few cents along the docks. The mate carelessly told him to take the stuff, and be off; which he promptly did, carrying away with him his tub of slush, with its concealed treasure. It is worthy of note, that this negro, far from home and from the owners of the money, paid it into a bank to the credit of the captain whom he had served.

Salem, Mass., was another great port for privateers to hail from. Not less than twenty-five of these predatory gentry fitted out at the quiet little seaside village; and, when the war was ended, few of the inhabitants were unable to tell some tale of personal adventures, cruising against the enemy. Indeed, Salem had the honor of receiving the first prize captured on the ocean after the declaration



of war; for into the harbor came, on the 10th of June, 1812, the trim privateer schooner "Fame," followed close by two ships, from the halliards of which waved the British flag surmounted by the stars and stripes. Then the whole town turned out as one man to greet and cheer the captors; but, long before the war was ended, the appearance of a prize in the harbor aroused little excitement. One of the most successful of the rovers sailing from this port was the "Dolphin," whose record during the war shows a list of twenty-two captured vessels. Her faculty for making long cruises, and turning up in the most unexpected places, made her the dread of all British sea-captains. She was manned by a gallant set of lads, who had no fear of hard fighting; and many of her prizes were won at the cannon's mouth. In January, 1813, the "Dolphin" fell in with a British ship and brig cruising together off Cape St. Vincent. Though the enemy outnumbered the privateersmen, and carried heavier metal, yet the "Dolphin" went gallantly into the fight, and after a severe battle succeeded in taking both vessels. Great was the astonishment of the British at being thus snapped up by a Yankee privateer almost under the guns of the Rock of Gibraltar. The luckless Britons were carried to America as prisoners; but so kind was the treatment they met with at the hands of the privateers, that on leaving the "Dolphin," at Boston, they published a card in which they said, "Should the fortune of war ever throw Capt. Stafford or any of his crew into the hands of the British, it is sincerely hoped he will meet with similar treatment."

Perhaps the foremost of all the fighting privateers was the "Gen. Armstrong" of New York; a schooner mounting eight long nines and one long twenty-four on a pivot. She had a crew of ninety men, and was commanded on her first cruise by Capt. Guy R. Champlin. This vessel was one of the first to get to sea, and had cruised for several months with fair success, when in March, 1813, she gave chase to a sail off the Surinam River on the coast of South America. The stranger seemed to evince no great desire to escape; and the privateer soon gained sufficiently to discover that the supposed merchantman was a British sloop-of-war, whose long row of open ports showed that she carried twenty-seven guns. Champlin and his men found this a more ugly customer than they had expected; but it was too late to retreat, and to surrender was out of the question: so, calling the people to the guns, Champlin took his ship into action with a steadiness that no old naval captain could have exceeded. "Close quarters and quick work," was the word passed along the gun-deck; and the "Armstrong" was brought alongside her antagonist at a distant of half pistol-shot. For nearly an hour the two vessels exchanged rapid broadsides; but, though the American gunners were the better marksmen, the heavy build of the sloop-of-war enabled her to stand against broadsides which would have cut the privateer to pieces. Capt. Champlin was hit in the shoulder early in the action, but kept his station until the fever of his wound forced him to retire to his cabin. However, he still continued to direct the course of the action; and, seeing that the tide of battle was surely going against him, he ordered the crew to get out the sweeps and pull away from the enemy, whose rigging was too badly cut up to enable her to give chase. This was quickly done; and the "Gen. Armstrong," though badly injured, and with her decks covered with dead and dying men, escaped, leaving her more powerful adversary to repair damages and make the best of her way home. Capt. Champlin, on his arrival at New York, was the hero of the hour. For a privateer to have held out for an hour against a man-of-war, was thought a feat worthy of praise from all classes of men. The merchants of the city tendered the gallant captain a dinner, and the stockholders in his vessel presented him with a costly sword.

But the "Gen. Armstrong" was destined to fight yet another battle, which should far eclipse the glory of her first. A new captain was to win the laurels this time; for Capt. Champlin's wound had forced him to retire, and his place was filled by Capt. Samuel C. Reid. On the 26th of September, 1814, the privateer was lying at anchor in the roadstead of Fayal. Over the land that enclosed the snug harbor on three sides, waved the flag of Portugal, a neutral power, but unfortunately one of insufficient strength to enforce the rights of neutrality. While the "Armstrong" was thus lying in the port, a British squadron, composed of the "Plantagenet" seventy-four, the "Rota" thirty-eight, and "Carnation" eighteen, hove in sight, and soon swung into the harbor and dropped anchor. Reid

watched the movements of the enemy with eager vigilance. He knew well that the protection of Portugal would not aid him in the least should the captain of that seventy-four choose to open fire upon the "Armstrong." The action of the British in coming into the harbor was in itself suspicious, and the American had little doubt that the safety of his vessel was in jeopardy. While he was pacing the deck, and weighing in his mind the probability of an assault by the British, he caught sight of some unusual stir aboard the hostile ships. It was night; but the moon had risen, and by its pale light Reid saw four large barges let fall from the enemy's ships, and, manned by about forty men each, make toward his vessel. In an instant every man on the privateer was called to his post. That there was to be an attack, was now certain; and the Americans determined not to give up their vessel without at least a vigorous attempt to defend her. Reid's first act was to warp his craft under the guns of a rather dilapidated castle, which was supposed to uphold the authority of Portugal over the island and adjacent waters. Hardly had the position been gained, when the foremost of the British boats came within hail, and Capt. Reid shouted, "Boat ahoy! What boat's that?" No response followed the hail; and it was repeated, with the warning, "Answer, or I shall fire into you." Still the British advanced without responding; and Reid, firmly convinced that they purposed to carry his ship with a sudden dash, ordered his gunners to open on the boats with grape. This was done, and at the first volley the British turned and made off. Capt. Reid then warped his vessel still nearer shore; and bending springs on her cable, so that her broadside might be kept always toward the enemy, he awaited a second attack. At midnight the enemy were seen advancing again, this time with fourteen barges and about five hundred men. While the flotilla was still at long range, the Americans opened fire upon them with the heavy "Long Tom;" and, as they came nearer, the full battery of long nine-pounders took up the fight. The carnage in the advancing boats was terrible; but the plucky Englishmen pushed on, meeting the privateer's fire with volleys of musketry and carronades. Despite the American fire, the British succeeded in getting under the bow and quarter of the "Armstrong," and strove manfully to board; while the Americans fought no less bravely to keep them back. The attack became a furious hand-to-hand battle. From behind the boarding-nettings the Americans thrust pikes, and fired pistols and muskets, at their assailants, who, mounted on each other's shoulders, were hacking fiercely at the nettings which kept them from gaining the schooner's deck. The few that managed to clamber on the taffrail of the "Armstrong" were thrust through and through with pikes, and hurled, thus horribly impaled, into the sea. The fighting was fiercest and deadliest on the quarter; for there were most of the enemy's boats, and there Capt. Reid led the defence in person. So hot was the reception met by the British at this point, that they drew off in dismay, despairing of ever gaining the privateer's deck. Hardly did Reid see the enemy thus foiled on the quarter, when a chorus of British cheers from the forecastle, mingled with yells of rage, told that the enemy had succeeded in effecting a lodgement there. Calling his men about him, the gallant captain dashed forward and was soon in the front rank of the defenders, dealing furious blows with his cutlass, and crying out, "Come on, my lads, and we'll drive them into the sea." The leadership of an officer was all that the sailors needed. The three lieutenants on the forecastle had been killed or disabled, else the enemy had never come aboard. With Reid to cheer them on, the sailors rallied, and with a steady advance drove the British back into their boats. The disheartened enemy did not return to the attack, but returned to their ships, leaving behind two boats captured and two sunk. Their loss in the attack was thirty-four killed and eighty-six wounded. On the privateer were two killed and seven wounded.

But the attack was not to end here. Reid was too old a sailor to expect that the British, chagrined as they were by two repulses, were likely to leave the privateer in peace. He well knew that the withdrawal of the barges meant not an abandonment, but merely a short discontinuance, of the attack. Accordingly he gave his crew scarcely time to rest, before he set them to work getting the schooner in trim for another battle. The wounded were carried below, and the decks cleared of splinters and wreckage. The boarding-nettings were patched up, and hung again in place. "Long Tom" had been knocked off his carriage by a carronade shot, and had to be remounted; but all was done quickly, and

by morning the vessel was ready for whatever might be in store for her. The third assault was made soon after daybreak. Evidently the enemy despaired of his ability to conquer the privateersmen in a hand-to-hand battle; for this time he moved the brig "Carnation" up within range, and opened fire upon the schooner. The man-of-war could fire nine guns at a broadside, while the schooner could reply with but seven; but "Long Tom" proved the salvation of the privateer. The heavy twenty-four-pound shots from this gun did so much damage upon the hull of the brig, that she was forced to draw out of the action; leaving the victory, for the third time, with the Americans.

But now Capt. Reid decided that it was folly to longer continue the conflict. The overwhelming force of the enemy made any thought of ultimate escape folly. It only remained for the British to move the seventy-four "Plantagenet" into action to seal the doom of the Yankee privateer. The gallant defence already made by the Americans had cost the British nearly three hundred men in killed and wounded; and Reid now determined to destroy his vessel, and escape to the shore. The great pivot-gun was accordingly pointed down the main hatch, and two heavy shots sent crashing through the bottom. Then applying the torch, to make certain the work of destruction, the privateersmen left the ship, giving three cheers for the gallant "Gen. Armstrong," as a burst of flame and a roar told that the flames had reached her magazine.

This gallant action won loud plaudits for Capt. Reid when the news reached the United States. Certainly no vessel of the regular navy was ever more bravely or skilfully defended than was the "Gen. Armstrong." But, besides the credit won for the American arms, Reid had unknowingly done his country a memorable service. The three vessels that attacked him were bound to the Gulf of Mexico, to assist in the attack upon New Orleans. The havoc Reid wrought among their crews, and the damage he inflicted upon the "Carnation," so delayed the New Orleans expedition, that Gen. Jackson was able to gather those motley troops that fought so well on the plains of Chalmette. Had it not been for the plucky fight of the lads of the "Gen. Armstrong," the British forces would have reached New Orleans ten days earlier, and Packenham's expedition might have ended very differently.

The "Plantagenet" and her consorts were not the only British men-of-war bound for New Orleans that fell in with warlike Yankee privateers. Some of the vessels from the Chesapeake squadron met a privateer, and a contest ensued, from which the American emerged with less glory than did the lads of the "Gen. Armstrong." A young British officer in his journal thus tells the story: —

"It was my practice to sit for hours, after nightfall, upon the taffrail, and strain my eyes in the attempt to distinguish objects on shore, or strange sails in the distance. It so happened that on the 30th I was tempted to indulge in this idle but bewitching employment even beyond my usual hour for retiring, and did not quit the deck till towards two o'clock in the morning of the 31st [of October]. I had just entered my cabin, and was beginning to undress, when a cry from above of an enemy in chase drew me instantly to the quarter-deck. On looking astern I perceived a vessel making directly after us, and was soon convinced of the justice of the alarm, by a shot which whistled over our heads. All hands were now called to quarters, the small sails taken in; and having spoken to our companion, and made an agreement as to position, both ships cleared for action. But the stranger, seeing his signal obeyed with so much alacrity, likewise slackened sail, and, continuing to keep us in view, followed our wake without approaching nearer. In this state things continued till daybreak, — we still holding our course, and he hanging back; but, as soon as it was light, he set more sail and ran to windward, moving just out of gun-shot in a parallel direction with us. It was now necessary to fall upon some plan of deceiving him; otherwise, there was little probability that he would attack. In the bomb, indeed, the height of the bulwarks served to conceal some of the men; but in the transport no such screen existed. The troops were therefore ordered below; and only the sailors, a few blacks, and the officers kept the deck. The same expedient was likewise adopted in part by Capt. Price of the 'Volcano;' and, in order to give to his ship a still greater resemblance than it already had to a merchantman, he displayed an old faded scarlet ensign, and drew up his fore and main sail in what sailors term a lubberly manner.

"As yet the stranger had shown no colors, but from her build and rigging there was little doubt as to her country. She was a beautiful schooner, presenting seven ports of a side, and apparently crowded with men, – circumstances which immediately led us to believe that she was an American privateer. The 'Volcano,' on the other hand, was a clumsy, strong-built ship, carrying twelve guns; and the 'Golden Fleece' mounted eight: so that in point of artillery the advantage was rather on our side; but the American's sailing was so much superior to that of either of us, that this advantage was more than counter-balanced.

"Having dodged us till eight o'clock, and reconnoitred with great exactness, the stranger began to steer gradually nearer and nearer, till at length it was judged that she was within range. A gun was accordingly fired from the 'Volcano,' and another from the transport; the balls from both of which passed over her, and fell into the sea. Finding herself thus assaulted, she now threw off all disguise, and hung out an American ensign. When putting her helm up, she poured a broadside with a volley of musketry into the transport, and ran alongside of the bomb, which sailed to windward.

"As soon as her flag was displayed, and her intention of attacking discerned, all hands were ordered up; and she received two well-directed broadsides from the 'Volcano,' as well as a warm salute from the 'Golden Fleece.' But such was the celerity of her motion, that she was alongside of the bomb in less time than can be imagined, and actually dashing her bow against the other, attempted to carry her by boarding. Capt. Price, however, was ready to receive them. The boarders were at their posts in an instant; and Jonathan finding, to use a vulgar phrase, that he had caught a Tartar, left about twenty men upon the 'Volcano's' bowsprit, all of whom were thrown into the sea, and filling his sails sheered off with the same speed with which he had borne down. In attempting to escape, he unavoidably fell somewhat to leeward, and exposed the whole of his deck to the fire of the transport. A tremendous discharge of musketry saluted him as he passed; and it was almost laughable to witness the haste with which his crew hurried below, leaving none upon deck except such as were absolutely wanted to work the vessel.

"The 'Volcano' had by this time filled and gave chase, firing with great precision at his yards and rigging, in the hope of disabling him. But, as fortune would have it, none of his important ropes or yards were cut; and we had the mortification to see him in a few minutes beyond our reach.

An exploit of yet another privateer should be chronicled before the subject of the private armed navy can be dismissed. On the 11th of October, 1814, the brigantine privateer "Prince de Neufchatel," seventeen guns, was encountered near Nantucket by the British frigate "Endymion," – the same ship which was so roughly handled by the "President" in her last battle. About nine o'clock at night, a calm having come on, the frigate despatched a boarding party of a hundred and eleven men in five boats to capture the privateer. The latter vessel was short-handed, having but forty men; but this handful of Yankee tars gallantly prepared to meet the attack. The guns were charged with grape and canister, the boarding-nettings triced up, and cutlasses and pistols distributed to the crew. As the British came on, the Americans opened fire, notwithstanding which the enemy dashed alongside, and strove fiercely to gain the deck. But in this they were foiled by the gallantry of the defenders, who fought desperately, and cut down the few British who managed to gain a foothold. The conflict was short, and the discomfiture of the enemy complete. After but a few minutes' fighting, one boat was sunk, one captured, and the other three drifted helplessly away, filled with dead and dying. The total loss of the British in this affair was twenty-eight killed and thirty-seven wounded. Of the crew of the privateer, seven were killed, and nine only remained unhurt.

A narrative of the exploits of, and service done by, the American sailors in the War of 1812 would be incomplete if it said nothing of the sufferings of that great body of tars who spent the greater part of the war season confined in British prisons. Several thousand of these were thrown into confinement before the war broke out, because they refused to serve against their country in British ships. Others were prisoners of war. No exact statistics as to the number of Americans thus imprisoned have ever been made public; but the records of one great prison – that at Dartmoor –

show, that, when the war closed, six thousand American seamen were imprisoned there, twenty-five hundred of whom had been detained from long before the opening of the war, on account of their refusal to join the ranks of the enemy. As I write, there lies before me a quaint little book, put out anonymously in 1815, and purporting to be the "Journal of a Young Man captured by the British." Its author, a young surgeon of Salem, named Waterhouse, shipped on a Salem privateer, and was captured early in the war. His experience with British prisons and transport-ships was long; and against his jailors he brings shocking charges of brutality, cruelty, and negligence.

The Yankee seamen who were captured during the war were first consigned to receiving-prisons at the British naval stations in America. Sometimes these places of temporary detention were mouldering hulks, moored in bays or rivers; sometimes huge sheds hastily put together, and in which the prisoners were kept only by the unceasing vigilance of armed guards. "The prison at Halifax," writes Waterhouse, "erected solely for the safe-keeping of prisoners of war, resembles an horse-stable, with stalls, or stanchions, for keeping the cattle from each other. It is to a contrivance of this sort that they attach the cords that support those canvas bags or cradles, called hammocks. Four tier of these hanging nests were made to hang, one above the other, between these stalls, or stanchions... The general hum and confused noise from almost every hammock was at first very distressing. Some would be lamenting their hard fate at being shut up like negro slaves in a Guinea ship, or like fowls in a hen-coop, for no crime, but for fighting the battles of their country; others, late at night, were relating their adventures to a new prisoner; others, lamenting their aberrations from rectitude, and disobedience to parents, and headstrong wilfulness, that drove them to sea, contrary to their parents' wish; while others, of the younger class, were sobbing out their lamentations at the thoughts of what their mothers and sisters suffered after knowing of their imprisonment. Not unfrequently the whole night was spent in this way; and when, about daybreak, the weary prisoner fell into a doze, he was waked from his slumber by the grinding noise of the locks, and the unbarring of the doors, with the cry of '*Turn out! All out!*' when each man took down his hammock, and lashed it up, and slung it on his back, and was ready to answer to the roll-call of the turnkey."

From prisons such as this, the prisoners were conveyed in droves to England, in the holds of men-of-war and transports. Poorly fed, worse housed, and suffering for lack of air and room, their agony on the voyage was terrible. When they were allowed a few hours' time on deck, they were sure to arouse the anger of the officers by turbulent conduct or imprudent retorts. "One morning as the general and the captain of the 'Regulus' (transport) were walking as usual on the quarter-deck, one of our Yankee boys passed along the galley with his kid of burgoo. He rested it on the hatchway while he adjusted the rope ladder to descend with his swill. The thing attracted the attention of the general, who asked the man how many of his comrades eat of that quantity for their breakfast. 'Six, sir,' said the man, 'but it is fit food only for hogs.' This answer affronted the captain, who asked the man in an angry tone, 'What part of America he came from?' 'Near to Bunker Hill, sir, if you ever heard of that place,' was the answer." On another occasion, a Yankee and a slightly wounded British marine got into a dispute, and came to blows. The British captain saw the occurrence, and accused the American of cowardice in striking a wounded man. "I am no coward, sir," said the Yankee. "I was captain of a gun on board the 'Constitution' when she captured the 'Guerriere,' and afterward when she took the 'Java.' Had I been a coward, I should not have been there."

On one occasion the prisoners on the transport "Crown Prince," lying in the River Medway, took an uncontrollable dislike to the commander of a second transport lying close alongside. Their spite was gratified quickly and with great effect. The rations served out to the luckless captives at that time consisted of fish and cold potatoes. The latter edible being of rather poor quality, the prisoners reserved for missiles; and the obnoxious officer could not pace his quarter-deck without being made a mark for a shower of potatoes. Vainly did he threaten to call up his marines and respond with powder and lead: the Americans were not to be kept down; and for some days the harassed officer hardly dared to show himself upon deck.

The place of final detention for most of the prisoners taken in the war with America was Dartmoor Prison; a rambling collection of huge frame buildings, surrounded by double walls of wood. The number of prisoners confined there, and the length of time which many of them had spent within its walls, gave this place many of the characteristics of a small State, with rulers and officials of its own. One of the strangest characters of the prison was King Dick, a gigantic negro, who ruled over the five or six hundred negro prisoners. "He is six feet five inches in height," says one of the prisoners, "and proportionally large. This black Hercules commands respect, and his subjects tremble in his presence. He goes the rounds every day, and visits every berth, to see if they all are kept clean. When he goes the rounds, he puts on a large bear-skin cap, and carries in his hand a huge club. If any of his men are dirty, drunken, or grossly negligent, he threatens them with a beating; and if they are saucy they are sure to receive one. They have several times conspired against him, and attempted to dethrone him; but he has always conquered the rebels. One night several attacked him while asleep in his hammock: he sprang up, and seized the smallest by his feet, and thumped another with him. The poor negro, who had thus been made a beetle of, was carried the next day to the hospital, sadly bruised, and provokingly laughed at." King Dick, to further uphold his dignity as a monarch, had his private chaplain, who followed his royal master about, and on Sundays preached rude but vigorous sermons to His Majesty's court. On weekdays the court was far from being a dignified gathering. King Dick was a famous athlete, and in the cock-loft, over which he reigned, was to be seen fine boxing and fencing. Gambling, too, was not ruled out of the royal list of amusements; and the cries of the players, mingled with the singing of the negroes, and the sounds of the musical instruments upon which they played, made that section of the prison a veritable pandemonium.

But although some few incidents occurred to brighten momentarily the dull monotony of the prisoners' lot, the life of these unfortunate men, while thus imprisoned, was miserable and hateful to them. Months passed, and even years, but there seemed to be no hope for release. At last came the news of the declaration of peace. How great then was the rejoicing! Thoughts of home, of friends and kindred, flooded the minds of all; and even strong men, whom the hardships of prison-life had not broken down, seemed to give way all at once to tears of joy. But the delays of official action, "red-tape," and the sluggishness of travel in that day, kept the poor fellows pent up for months after the treaty of peace had been announced to them. Nor were they to escape without suffering yet more severely at the hands of their jailors. Three months had passed since peace had been declared; and the long delay so irritated the prisoners, that they chafed under prison restraint, and showed evidences of a mutinous spirit. The guards, to whom was intrusted the difficult task of keeping in subjection six thousand impatient and desperate men, grew nervous, fearing that at any moment the horde of prisoners would rise and sweep away all before them. An outbreak was imminent; and the prisoners were like a magazine of gunpowder, needing but a spark of provocation to explode. On April 6, 1815, matters reached a crisis. The soldiers, losing all presence of mind, fired on the defenceless Americans, killing five men and wounding thirty-four. Thus the last blood shed in the War of 1812 was the blood of unarmed prisoners. But the massacre, horrible and inexcusable as it was, had the effect of hastening the release of the survivors; and soon the last of the captives was on his way home to the country over which peace at last reigned again.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### **THE LONG PEACE BROKEN BY THE WAR WITH MEXICO. – ACTIVITY OF THE NAVY. – CAPTAIN STOCKTON'S STRATAGEM. – THE BATTLE AT SAN JOSÉ. – THE BLOCKADE. – INSTANCES OF PERSONAL BRAVERY. – THE LOSS OF THE "TRUXTON." – YELLOW FEVER IN THE SQUADRON. – THE NAVY AT VERA CRUZ. – CAPTURE OF ALVARADO**

The period of peace which followed the close of the War of 1812 was, perhaps, the longest which any nation has ever enjoyed. For the navy of the United States, it was a time of absolute peace, inactivity, even stagnation. The young nation was living literally up to Washington's rule of avoiding entanglements abroad, and its people looked with suspicion on the naval branch of the service which had rendered such a good account of itself in the war with Great Britain. They feared to build and man ships lest possession of a navy might prove an incentive to war. And so when war did come – war, not with Europe, but with our nearest neighbor – the United States had little floating force to join in it. Fortunately, little was needed.

Though war was not declared by the United States against Mexico until May, 1846, it had been a possibility ever since the establishment of the Texan Republic by the defeat of the Mexicans at San Jacinto in 1834, and it had been a great probability since 1841, when it was discovered that both England and France were holding out prospects of assistance to the Mexicans in case of conflict with the United States. Neither of these European powers was sincere in the diplomatic game which deceived the proud but ignorant Mexicans, but neither did either of them scruple to foment a quarrel out of which some selfish, though indefinite, advantage might be gained. Indeed they played the diplomatic game so skilfully that they deceived a considerable minority in the United States and made these believe that the admission of Texas to the United States would be unwise and inexpedient, and the probable war with Mexico a wickedness dire and dreadful. Even General Grant, when he wrote his book, said that such were his views at the time, though he was then an army officer and trusting to war for advancement. But when hostilities were begun, and victory for American arms followed victory, the protests of the peace party were unheard amid the enthusiastic shoutings of those who took a saner view of the conditions which led to the conflict.

Mexico claimed title not only to Texas, but to California, and if the United States had not gone to war in regard to the former, she would have had to do so in defence of her conquest of the latter. In securing California the navy bore a conspicuous part, and as early as 1842, Captain Thomas Ap-Catesby Jones, commanding the Pacific squadron, was as active as though war had already been declared. In September of that year, with his squadron of four ships, he was at anchor in the harbor of Callao, and noticing the suspicious conduct of the British frigate "Dublin," which shoved off the port and then bore away, he concluded to follow her and see just what game she sought, as he had been informed by the Navy Department that England was plotting in Mexico against the United States; he had also read in a Mexican newspaper that war was likely to be declared, if indeed hostilities had not already begun. Captain Jones reached Monterey on the 19th of October, and though he saw nothing of the "Dublin," he at once insisted on the surrender of the place. The next day he learned that his action had been premature and made what amends he could. So the navy really struck the first official blow that led to this war.

When war had been declared, the Pacific squadron did not learn of it until after the victories of Palo Alto and Resaca de la Palma. Captain Sloat, in command, at once took prompt action. Landing two hundred and fifty seamen and marines under Captain Mervine, he captured Monterey

on the 2d of July. A week later he formally took possession of the splendid bay of San Francisco and the neighboring country. He also occupied Sutter's Fort, on Sacramento River, and the towns of Bodega and Sonoma. In this war it will be noticed throughout this narrative that the naval forces were constantly required to do shore duty, a duty to which they were unaccustomed but which they performed with entire efficiency. The Mexicans had no navy worthy of the name and the American sailors were auxiliary to the soldiers. Though untrained to this kind of service, and though it was always hard, and sometimes quite ungrateful, they responded to orders with entire cheerfulness; when the service was most perilous then the blue-jackets entered upon it with a gayety that laughed at danger.

On the 19th of July, Fremont and his corps of topographical engineers met Captain Sloat and thereafter co-operated with him. In the "Cyane," Commander Du Pont, Fremont was sent to San Diego with one hundred and fifty riflemen and that place was occupied. On the 30th of July, the "Congress" took possession of San Pedro, the port of Los Angeles, the seat of the Mexican government in California. About this time the command of the Pacific squadron devolved upon Captain Robert F. Stockton, who was not a whit less vigilant than his predecessors had been. Having all the California seaports, Captain Stockton planned an expedition against Los Angeles before the well-armed Mexican soldiers in the province could be brought together. He landed three hundred and fifty sailors and marines and established a camp at San Pedro. Captain Stockton's biographer says: "There were only about ninety muskets in the whole corps. Some of the men were armed with carbines, others had only pistols, swords, or boarding-pikes. They presented a motley and peculiar appearance, with great variety of costume. Owing to their protracted absence from home the supplies of shoes and clothing had fallen short, and the ragged and diversified colors of their garments, as well as the want of uniformity in their arms and accoutrements, made them altogether a spectacle both singular and amusing." The Mexican forces at Los Angeles outnumbered Captain Stockton's land forces three to one, so he resorted to a stratagem to deceive the enemy as to his force. A flag of truce having appeared on the hills, "he ordered all his men under arms and directed them to march three or four abreast, with intervals of considerable space between each squad, directly in the line of vision of the approaching messengers, to the rear of some buildings on the beach, and thence to turn in a circle and continue their march until the strangers had arrived. Part of the circle described in the march was concealed from view, so that to the strangers it would appear that a force ten times greater than the actual number was defiling before them. When the two bearers of the flag of truce had arrived he ordered them to be led up to him alongside of the artillery, which consisted of several six-pounders and one thirty-two-pound carronade. The guns were all covered with skins so as to conceal their dimensions except the huge mouth of the thirty-two-pounder at which the captain was stationed to receive his guests... As his purpose was intimidation he received them with much sternness." They asked for a truce, but Stockton demanded and secured an immediate and absolute surrender, as the evident object of the Mexicans was to gain time. Stockton at once began his tedious march to Los Angeles, his men dragging the cannon through the sand. On the 12th of August, he received a message from the Mexican general, saying "if he marched on the town he would find it the grave of his men." He replied: "Then tell your general to have the bells ready to toll at eight o'clock in the morning. I shall be there at that time." He was as good as his word. The next morning he was joined by Fremont and his men, who had come up from San Diego and they entered Los Angeles unopposed. He organized a civil government for the entire state, with Major Fremont as the head of it, and returning to his ships sailed northward on the 5th of September, 1846. The news of these operations was sent to Washington overland by the famous scout, Kit Carson.



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