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“DON'T GIVE UP THE SHIP.”

Delving in the dust of ten decades.

by

GEORGE SHELDON.

President
" *Deerfield Mass*
Paper read at the forty-fifth annual meeting of the
Pocumtuck Valley Memorial Association,
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DEERFIELD,

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“Don't Give Up the Ship.”

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By GEORGE SHELDON.

There has been a wide notice the past year of the events of the War of 1812—'14. Centennial anniversaries have been celebrated, and the newspapers have been filled with reports. My field of investigation has been somewhat limited, but every article I have seen, and nearly every person I have talked with on the subject, has been imbued with a mistaken idea, regarding the origin of the famous words, “Don't Give up the Ship.”

Throughout my small area of information it has been almost uniformly asserted that these words were originally spoken by Oliver Hazard Perry, on the occasion of his great victory on Lake Erie, Sept. 10, 1813. This is an error. This apparent condition of the public mind has moved me to write this paper. I wish to do justice to an honored name.

The words were uttered by Capt. James Lawrence on the first of June, 1813.

Lawrence was a man with a career. As a youth of twenty-three, while serving as lieutenant under Stephen Decatur, he was one of the party who earned lasting fame in the capture and destruction of the ship *Philadelphia*, in that nest of pirates, the harbor of Tripoli, Feb. 15, 1804.

Why the licensed piracy of the Algerines had been allowed to dominate the naval world for three hundred years, and dictate terms of tribute to every naval power, is utterly past comprehension, but such was the fact. I have never met a single line in which any one has ever attempted to give an explanation of this condition of affairs. Even our own country had so far degraded itself as to build and present a war-ship, the *Crescent*, to the Dey of Algiers, on demand.

But be it stated to the credit of our young country—only thirty-two years acknowledged to be a nation—that she made the first move in the world-wide rebellion against this infamous practice, as will soon appear.

War with Great Britain was declared June 18, 1812. Lawrence had been continued in active service, and was now in command of the sloop-of-war, *Hornet*. Feb. 24, 1813, the *Hornet* fell in with the British sloop-of-war, *Peacock*, and after a short but fierce contest the British bird sank, carrying down thirteen of her own crew, and also three of the *Hornet's* men who were engaged in a mission of rescue.

This was one of those splendid victories that set the world agape and threw Great Britain into a terrible panic which was intensified as the months sped on.

To the brilliant achievement of the *Hornet* and *Peacock* may be added the capture of the *Guerriere* by the *Constitution*, Capt. Isaac Hull. This was peculiarly humbling to Great Britain for the *Guerriere* was a particularly fine ship which she had captured from the French, as its name would indicate, and exhibited as a token of her prowess. In less than half an hour after the first gun, the British colors lay at the feet of Capt. Hull. The *Guerriere* had been dismasted, and was in a sinking condition. She was, in fact, such a wreck that Capt. Hull thought she was not worth the attempt of taking her into port, and therefore she was blown up; her crew was carried into Boston, where Hull received "such an ovation as few men have ever earned in so short a time."

The capture, soon after, of the British war-ship, *Frolic*, by Capt. Jones of the *Wasp*, was another of those brilliant exploits so widely celebrated in story and song.

The consternation in England was still further increased by another victory, when Capt. Stephen Decatur of the *United States* captured the British war-ship, *Macedonian*. In his official report to the Secretary of the Navy, Decatur says, the *Macedonian* mounting 49 guns "is a frigate of the largest class two years old, four months out of dock, and reputed one of the best sailors in the British service." Decatur continues, speaking of his own crew, "the enthusiasm of every officer, sea-

man and marine on board this ship, on discovering the enemy—their steady conduct in battle, and precision of their fire, could not be surpassed.”

Had the wireless existed in the closing days of the year the nerves of Great Britain must have been again shocked by the news on Dec. 29, 1812, of the fate of another favorite frigate, the *Java*, which was captured and destroyed by Capt. Bainbridge of our *Constitution*; and once more when Bainbridge, in the *Enterprise*, repeated this exploit by capturing the brig *Boxer*.

My allotted time will not allow of the specific mention of other remarkable victories by our invincible tars.

It will no doubt be a cause of general surprise to learn the real condition of public opinion on naval matters in England at this period.

To reveal this condition a few extracts from reliable authorities will be given. It will appear that England was undergoing a genuine scare on the question of naval supremacy. The following is from a French newspaper:—

“The British who had triumphed in so many naval combats, previously to the prevailing American War, have long relinquished the practice of rejoicing for victories obtained over a single frigate. If an achievement of that sort took place against any of the European powers, the detail of the action was merely inserted in the *London Gazette*, the papers of the metropolis echoed the narrative, paid a passing compliment to the officer, and the affair went off being recorded, *pro memoria*, in the *Naval Chronicle*, as a thing of course. * * * In the Americans the British have found an enemy that has obstructed the agreeable train of their maritime ideas. The citizens of the United States are the best seamen in the world. Their officers are men of nautical science, of great experience, and generally in the prime of life. The first naval combat of the war, marked, not a single equality of skill and courage in the men of the two countries, but a decided superiority in favour of the Americans. If the English pride was mortified in the sudden reverse by the capture of the *Guerriere*, the whole British government was thrown into consternation at the capture of the *Macedonian*, the *Java*, the *Frolic* and the *Peacock*. Such rapid and succes-

sive defeats made the cabinet of St. James bristle again; it seemed as if all the English captains were doomed to pass, one after the other, under the Yankee yoke, or to the regions of the dead!"

O'Connor in his *History of the War*, published in 1817, endorses the above statement.

An English newspaper of this period says, "It will not do for our vessels to fight theirs single handed."

John Quincy Adams, then Minister at St. Petersburg, writes under date of Jan. 31, 1813,—“I have been reading a multitude of speculations in the English Newspapers, about the capture of their two Frigates, *Guerriere* and *Macedonian*. They have settled it that the American forty-fours are line of battleships in disguise, and that henceforth all the frigates in the British Navy are to have the privilege of running away from them! This of itself is no despicable result of the first half year of War. Let it be once understood as a matter of course that every single frigate in the British Navy is to shrink from a contest with the American frigates, and even this will have its effect upon the Spirits of the Tars on both sides.

“It differs a little from the time when the *Guerriere* went out with her name painted in Capitals on her fore top sail, in search of our disguised line of battleship *President*.

“But the English Admiralty have further ordered the immediate construction of seventeen new frigates, to be disguised line of Battleships, too. Their particular destination is to be to fight the Americans. Their numbers will be six to one against us, unless we too, taking the hint from our success, can build frigate for frigate and meet them on their own terms.”

The following taken from the “Croker Papers” will give us a clear idea of the condition of the naval mind in view of the recent American triumphs:—

“My Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty having received intelligence that several of the American ships of war are now at sea I have their Lordships’ commands to acquaint you therewith, and that they do not conceive that any of his Majesty’s frigates should attempt to engage, single handed, the

larger class of American ships, which, though they may be called frigates, are of a size, complement and weight of metal much beyond that class, and more resembling line of battle-ships." [Much of this palaver about the size of our ships was mere fable, and used only as a balm to heal British humiliating sores.]

"In the event of one of his Majesty's frigates under your orders falling in with one of these ships, his Captain should endeavor in the first instance to secure the retreat of his Majesty's ships, but if he finds that he has an advantage in sailing he shall endeavor to manoeuvre, and keep company with her, without coming to action, in the hope of falling in with some other of his Majesty's ships with whose assistance the enemy might be attacked with a reasonable hope of success.

"It is their Lordships' further directions that you make this known as soon as possible to the several captains commanding his Majesty's ships."

John Quincy Adams again writes:— "The *Times* abuses the Ministry for not having blown the American Navy to atoms, and Canning abuses them in Parliament for not having ravaged our coast with fire and sword. They say in answer to the first that they gave orders to their admirals on the American Station to burn, sink and destroy all American vessels * * * and that they have constantly had on those American Stations a force equal to seven times the whole American Navy."

In a letter written Feb. 25, 1813, Mrs. Abigail Adams gives a lively account of the state of affairs at this time:—

"First in the triumph was Captain Hull in the frigate *Constitution*, who engaged and captured the British frigate *Guerriere* making her a wreck * * * Capt. Jones in the *Wasp* sloop of war fought, dismasted and took the British sloop of war the *Frolic* * * * Commodore Decatur in the frigate U. S. captured the British frigate *Macedonian*, and brought her safely into New York * * * Commodore Bainbridge * * * engaged, fought and conquered the British frigate *Java*. * * * I have been concise for time would fail me to detail to you how these conquerors have been received, and the honors which have been conferred upon them by Legislatures and public bodies in the various States."

Had Mrs. Adams been in connection with the electric telegraph she would have related also the fate of the British war-ship *Peacock* which was stung to death by the *Hornet*, under Capt. James Lawrence, the very day before her letter was written.

We now come to the story of the *Chesapeake* and *Shannon*. The name of the *Chesapeake* had been for years as familiar as a household word. It had appeared in every newspaper in England and America.

The wanton attack upon the *Chesapeake* by the British ship, *Leopard*, in 1807, was one of the prime causes that led to the War of 1812. The incident had been doctored by the diplomats, and the insult was supposed to have been atoned for; the wound, however, never healed, but continued to rankle in the American bosom.

The *Chesapeake* will now appear in a new role. In the spring of 1813 she was stationed in Boston Harbor. About the middle of May, Capt. James Lawrence, whose startling record in the conquest of the *Peacock* had astonished Great Britain, and aroused the admiration of the world, was put in command. Capt. Lawrence accepted the position with reluctance. Things were not as they should have been on board the *Chesapeake*. Capt. Evans, the previous commander, had recently returned from a long cruise, and there was some undetermined complaint among the sailors in regard to prize money. Some writers have said that a faction was in an almost mutinous condition. Capt. Evans had resigned. The *Chesapeake* was being refitted and the crew reorganized. Capt. Lawrence did the best he could in regard to the officers and crew, and made efforts to satisfy the disaffected sailors. Evidently, however, the discontent among the men was not wholly allayed.

In the meantime things were happening. Great Britain, as we have seen, had been in great distress of mind over the victories achieved by the "upstart" American captains. She had offered attractive and valuable prizes for the capture of a Yankee war-ship.

Perhaps Capt. Philip Broke of the *Shannon* had some of these prizes in view when he made arrangements for a cruise to

the New England coast. Directions had been issued, as we have seen, by the British Admiralty to the different captains of the vessels not to go to sea alone for fear of meeting one of those formidable Yankees. Accordingly the *Tencdos*, a vessel of about equal size to the *Shannon*, was taken along with her as mate. Broke cruised about the New England coast, and without doubt was in communication with some of the anti-administration Federalists on shore; through them he probably received exaggerated reports of the disorganized condition of the *Chesapeake*. At any rate he took upon himself the responsibility of disobeying instructions of his Government not to fight an American ship alone. He soon appeared off Boston Harbor, flaunting his flag in the face of our small fleet.

Meanwhile Capt. Lawrence was bending all his energies in preparing for a cruise.

Capt. Broke had sent a challenge for Capt. Lawrence to meet him in a duel. In seeming chivalry, but as a clear matter of necessity, he had sent his mate to Halifax, knowing, of course, that Lawrence would never consent to meet two ships of equal size. With his challenge Broke sent a description of the strength of his vessel, naming the number of men, guns, etc.

The meanness and duplicity of Capt. Broke appear in the fact, to which all agree, that there were men fighting on board the *Shannon* wearing hats of two other crews, the *Tencdos* and the *Belle Poule*. The number of men given as smuggled on board differs according to various writers, from scores to hundreds; statements also differ in regard to the underrating of his guns.

It has been clearly established that Lawrence never received this challenge, as it did not arrive on the morning of June 1, until after he had sailed, but this makes no difference in the fact of Capt. Broke's duplicity.

From a lengthy account of the battle between the *Chesapeake* and the *Shannon* in M'Carty's *History of the American War of 1812*, published in 1817, we make two brief extracts:—

“A second and a third broadside was exchanged with evident advantage on the part of the *Chesapeake*.”

It thus appears that at first fortune favored Lawrence, but the fortunes of war, always uncertain, soon turned against the Americans.

“The Captain, the first [acting] lieutenant, the sailing master, the boat’s swain, the lieutenant of marines, the only acting lieutenant on the spar deck, were all killed or disabled.” The first lieutenant, Octavius Augustus Page, was then sick on shore, and died three days later.

But the great and final cause of the disaster was the persistent ill luck in the devastation amongst the rigging of the *Chesapeake*. The main stays were shot away, as were the most vital parts of the steering gear. Masts were tottering, spars were shattered, halyards and sails were hanging loosely in every direction. The *Chesapeake* had passed beyond human control, and it drifted a helpless wreck at the mercy of the winds and waves. The luckless current of the sea set her drifting diagonally stern foremost directly into the open mouths of the *Shannon’s* guns, without her being able to bring a single piece to bear upon the enemy’s ship. The decks of the *Chesapeake* were swept with a hail storm of iron from stern to stem; three helmsmen were killed, and scarcely a living thing could there exist.

Meanwhile Capt. Lawrence who had received a painful wound was still giving his orders from his post on the quarter deck. Here he received his mortal wound. While being carried below he gave his last command in the immortal words, “DON’T GIVE UP THE SHIP.”

After the second broadside the accidents of fortune seem to have predetermined that every missile of the *Shannon* should do its maximum of mischief.

Accounts of what followed vary in some minor particulars but the essentials are here given.

The instant the *Chesapeake* in its helpless drift came in contact with the *Shannon*, Capt. Brooke with a party of boarders leaped on deck without resistance.

In some sequestered nook of the forecastle, protected from the *Shannon’s* fire, part of the crew had collected, and were well supplied with small arms. These now, under the command

of First Lieutenant Ludlow made a desperate dash, and in a few minutes the larger part of the boarders lay upon the decks killed or wounded, including Capt. Broke, but Lieut. Ludlow had received his mortal wound. The constant stream of recruits from the abundant store surreptitiously provided by Capt. Broke soon overpowered the leaderless crew of the *Chesapeake*.

As quickly as possible the *Shannon* with her victim got away for Halifax. Capt. Lawrence was delirious so that we may hope he never knew that his last command had not been obeyed. The career of our distinguished hero ended June 5. He was buried at Halifax, June 8, with all the military honors which could be given a British officer. The funeral arrangements were in charge of the local government at Halifax, Capt. Broke being disabled by his wound.

The body of Capt. Lawrence, in a rich mahogany coffin, was borne from the *Chesapeake* to King's Wharf in a 12-oared barge with measured strokes, and minute guns, followed by a procession of boats, two and two, all filled with British naval officers, arranged in order of rank according to directions issued the day before by the senior naval officer at Halifax. Six British sea-captains officiated as pall-bearers, and, as an added mark of respect, one of his own flags from the *Chesapeake* was used for a pall.

The body was received at King's Wharf by the 64th regiment pursuant to an order issued to the land forces, with minute guns, muffled drums, colors draped in mourning, crepe on the left arm, and all known insignia of military mourning.

After most solemn obsequies conducted by the Rector of St. Paul the body was followed to the grave by a long procession of sailors, soldiers and citizens, including the wounded officers of both ships, and the captured officers and crew of the *Chesapeake*.

Three volleys were fired over the grave of the hero, and he was left to be,—

“By strangers honored and by strangers mourned.”

About this time there was living in Salem a patriot by the name of George Crowninshield. He had plenty of money and plenty of leisure, but he could not rest content so long as

the ashes of Capt. Lawrence were mingling with British soil. He procured the brig, *Henry*, enlisted an honorary crew of twelve Salem sea-captains; himself a captain, he took command and sailed away for Halifax. Obtaining permission from the authorities, he took the body of Capt. Lawrence on board the *Henry*, and conveyed it to Salem, where it was placed temporarily in a tomb while arrangements were being made for a public funeral.

August 17, 1813, Salem was thronged. An eye-witness says, "it was an occasion of great public mourning, and the sidewalks and housetops were black with spectators." The people were moved by contending emotions; grief at the loss of their naval hero, and satisfaction over the return of his precious remains.

But these remains were not long to rest in Salem. Under the management of the family of Capt. Lawrence plans were made to convey the body to New York in the *Henry*, the same brig in which they had been brought from Halifax. At this time New York was closely blockaded by the British. Application was made to Capt. Oliver, the leader, for permission to pass the *Henry*, with the body of Capt. Lawrence, under a flag of truce, into New York harbor.

According to the best available authorities this application was refused with shameful insolence. Other means, however, were found for conveying the remains to the city.

At New York, on Sept. 16, the funeral obsequies of Capt. Lawrence were observed in the most solemn and elaborate manner. It is estimated that 50,000 people assembled to do honor to our national hero. The ceremonies were under the direction of the city Council, and the city furnished the tomb for his final resting place.

I have dwelt at some length upon the condition of public opinion concerning Capt. Lawrence by his contemporaries a century ago, for the purpose of contrasting it with a lower estimate which appears in a late publication.

My attention has been called recently to an article contained in Volume 46 of the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, in which it appears to me gross injustice

is done to the memory of the gallant Capt. Lawrence. It is there stated by Rear-Admiral French Ensor Chadwick of the United States Navy that,—“Our real disaster, the loss of the *Chesapeake*, was simply the result of a bad judgment, probably better described as fatuity. Officers and crew were entirely new to the ship. *Not a gun's crew had been exercised, not a sail had been bent before the day of action.* To go out in such a state of unpreparedness to meet a ship of like force, which had been three years and a half in commission, was folly. We fight to win for the country, not to satisfy personal pride, and I can see nothing but unwisdom, amounting to folly, though it was coupled with great gallantry, in the conduct of the Captain of the *Chesapeake* in accepting a challenge under such almost hopeless circumstances.”

In passing let me say that here the Admiral has made one mistake. We have seen that Capt. Lawrence never received a challenge from Capt. Broke for the challenge did not reach Boston until after he had sailed.

In regard to the Admiral's insinuations concerning the character and motives of Capt. Lawrence I will say nothing, but in regard to the more serious charge of stupidity and inaction I have some evidence, fortunately, which proves that the Admiral is in error. I have notes made by my great uncle, Elihu Hoyt of Deerfield, known to me personally the last dozen years of his life, which throw light on the subject. Uncle Elihu's word was equal to the very best. He was a magistrate, and a prominent civilian in the politics of his state. He was for thirty years in its service as Councilor, Senator or Representative. In the year 1813 he was a member of the House. He was also at this time Captain of the militia in his native town; himself and company subject to be called into active service at the front at any moment, and was, of course, deeply interested in all the events of the war. On the 29th of May he went down the Harbor to visit Capt. Lawrence on board the *Chesapeake*, for the purpose of witnessing his practice in preparation for meeting British cruisers.

Uncle Elihu was a man of slender means with habits of strict economy. It is inconceivable that he should have gone

to the extravagance of hiring a boat and a crew, and of spending a day for a ceremonious call on Capt. Lawrence. The inference is irresistible that he had heard there was something doing down there, and that the same news had reached the ears of other Boston people, so that a party of friends clubbed together and went down to see the show and to satisfy their curiosity. They certainly would not have gone without a reasonable prospect of seeing something worth their while.

I copy the following, verbatim, from Uncle Elihu's note book:—"May 29th went on board the Frigate *Chesapeake*, stayed 3 or 4 hours, saw them exercise their great guns, & go through all the movements for attack & defence of a Ship in line of battle."

What does Admiral Chadwick suppose this boat load of Boston people were doing for three or four hours on board the *Chesapeake* that day? What were they there for?

Probably exaggerated rumors had reached the Boston sightseers of the practice performance of Capt. Lawrence for Uncle Elihu was not satisfied.

He says:—"was disappointed, did not find so good discipline as expected, they were not so expert at the great guns as I expected—Capt. Lawrence is a fine looking fellow."

On that day Uncle Elihu made the acquaintance of Lieut. Augustus Ludlow, and probably saw a good deal of him, for we may assume that the Lieutenant would be in the exercise of his office—drilling the crew for active service. The visitor speaks of Ludlow as "a rough fellow." Perhaps a rough fellow was needed to mould the raw material into shape for efficient action, and this may have been one of the qualifications for which he had been selected by Capt. Lawrence.

Three days after this visit occurred the battle of the *Chesapeake* and *Shannon* off Boston Harbor. The guns were heard in Boston and another party was organized.

Uncle Elihu writes:—

"June 1st *Chesapeake* went to sea was taken same day by the British Frigate *Shannon*, went down to see the action, was too late, saw the Frigates & the smoke of the guns, but the distance was too great to distinguish the movements, saw 4

or 5 gunboats at anchor below the light house, saw them fire their great guns, got back to Boston about 12 o'clock at night."

This excursion seems to be a little out of the ordinary for the air of that region was shivered by hurtling iron and charged with foul smoke, so that Uncle Elihu should have considered himself fortunate, instead of baffled, in not being able to reach this cyclone of destruction.

There is another piece of evidence bearing on the question of Capt. Lawrence's practice, showing that the charge of Admiral Chadwick is erroneous.

In the official report of the Court of Investigation on the loss of the *Chesapeake*, the members of which were such men as Hull and Bainbridge, the following statement occurs:—

"It appears to the Court, that as the ships were getting foul, Capt. Lawrence ordered the boarders to be called; but the bugle man, Wm. Brown, stationed to call the boarders by sounding a bugle, had deserted his quarters, and when discovered and ordered to call, was unable, from fright, to sound his horn; that midshipmen went below immediately to pass the word for the boarders; *but not being called in the way they had been usually exercised* few came upon the upper deck."

Here is evidence which cannot be disputed, that Capt. Lawrence, instead of being idle, was in active practice in preparation to meet the enemy. He was, certainly, systematically drilling an organized company of boarders.

There is no doubt the Board of Examiners believed the work of Capt. Lawrence had been so efficiently done, that even with every officer above the midshipman either dead or disabled in the cock pit, even then the Board believed that had the cowardly Scotch bugler remained at his post, and given the customary "Boarders' Call," the boarders would have responded, and Capt. Broke would never have found a foothold on the deck of the *Chesapeake*.

What Admiral Chadwick calls "our real disaster" was not so considered by the country, and it had no discouraging effects on the people. The Spirit of Freedom had been awakened, and was stirred to more and more vigorous action by the brilliant successes of Lawrence, Hull, Decatur and others.

In all my extensive reading of contemporaneous or other writers on the subject, I have never before met with a single syllable which would impute the loss of the *Chesapeake* to the inefficiency, stupidity, or "fatuity" as Admiral Chadwick puts it, of the commander. It has been generally considered that the loss was due to a fateful combination of unfortunate accidents.

The fame of our hero was not in the slightest degree tarnished. Witness: he was given what perhaps no other man had ever before received, three grand and imposing funeral ovations by contemporaries who knew his every act. The flagship of the fleet then building on Lake Erie was named, by the Secretary of the Navy, in his honor, the *Lawrence*, and on her banner was fittingly inscribed his dying words, "Don't Give up the Ship."

About three months after the battle of the *Chesapeake* and *Shannon* an event occurred which was the most notable in the naval history of the two nations. An entire British fleet was captured by an American fleet.

Oliver Hazard Perry was commander of the American fleet on Lake Erie and the British fleet was commanded by Capt. Robert H. Barclay.

Perry's flagship was the *Lawrence*. The patriotic women of Erie had presented him with a fighting flag, on which they had sewed in white block letters, twelve inches high, the last command of Capt. Lawrence, "Don't Give up the Ship." Under this flag the famous battle of Lake Erie was fought and won.

In this fierce struggle, by some trick of the wind or other cause, the vessels expected to support Perry did not appear, so that he was surrounded and overwhelmed by a greatly superior force. Under his inspiring motto he could not give up the ship. Ordering a boat with four oarsmen he took down his flag and rowed to the *Niagara*. When this flag was taken down the British considered the *Lawrence* had surrendered; their firing ceased, and loud cheers ran through the British fleet. But Perry's departure was soon observed, and the air around him was at once darkened by showers of round shot, grape, canister and bullets from the enemy.

In a few minutes his flag was flying at the mast head of the *Niagara*.

When Perry left the *Lawrence* his last charge to Lieut. Yarnall was, "Don't Give up the Ship." Yarnall accepted the charge and ran up his ship's flag at once, but when Perry's escape was observed the attack on the *Lawrence* was renewed with redoubled fury. Yarnall, with the crew reduced from 103 to 14, could no longer resist, and in a short time his ship's colors were lowered. Perry from the deck of the *Niagara* observed this action. In his official report he says:—

"It was with unspeakable pain that I saw, soon after I got on board the *Niagara*, the flag of the *Lawrence* come down, although I was perfectly sensible that she had been defended to the last, and that to have continued to make a show of resistance would have been a wanton sacrifice of the remains of her brave crew."

But the British could not take possession of the *Lawrence*; all were occupied in self defence, for in a trice the *Niagara* was amongst them pouring torrents of shot and shell from starboard and larboard with such terrible effect that in a few moments, not a British flag was flying on the waters of Lake Erie. *

Shortly after the close of the battle Perry returned to his old flagship, and transferred his flag to its original place. Not a British foot had fallen upon the deck of the *Lawrence*, nor did one, until Perry had the supreme satisfaction of seeing the six officials who had surrendered their vessels (the wounded Barelay by a representative) come on board, and, one by one, deliver up their swords in token of submission. The conclusion of each ceremony was the same—the handing back of the weapon to its owner.

Perry treated Capt. Barelay with the greatest kindness; later he gave him the use of his own cabin, the best surgical treatment and the tenderest care. By these acts of high courtesy, and others of a similar nature, Perry made personal friends of his official enemies.

* At this point a piece of the original hull of the *Niagara* was shown to the audience by the reader. It was a gift to our Museum from Mr. William H. Stebbins of Buffalo, N. Y., a native of Deerfield.

It has been said that Perry's motto flag was left flying on the *Lawrence* when her hero left her for the *Niagara*. Our distinguished historian, Bancroft, accepts this story, but in this he is contradicted by every other writer I have met, and goes, a hundred to one, against the probabilities of the case.

The main facts of our subject have here been given in simple prose. The brilliant victories of our Navy, however, gave opportunity to the bards to send abroad on the wings of song each his own version of our splendid exploits. I have seen, at least, a half dozen versions of "Perry's Victory." These songs may not, in all cases, be good literature, but there must needs have been some vent for the swelling pride of our minstrels over our national triumphs.

The country was flooded with these songs. They floated across the Atlantic, and doubtless every British sailor had heard their ringing notes in the mess-room; and they could not have been unknown even on the quarter deck.

The effect must have been depressing, and the Admiralty's orders to the captains not to go out on the water alone must have intensified the feeling. John Quincy Adams writes, "the effect of these songs in England was exasperating, but on our side of the water it was exhilarating."

The English writer who complains "we have no longer any national song" had no doubt become surfeited by their exultant notes. Without question he had heard of Chancellor Kilty's variation of "Rule Britannia:"—

"For see, *Columbia's* sons arise,
Firm, independent, bold and free;
They too shall seize the glorious prize,
And share the empire of the sea;
Hence then, let *freemen* rule the waves
And those who yield them still be slaves."

One of these songs, called "Perry's Victory," I remember hearing over eighty years ago. It was sung by the broom-makers in the shop on the homestead of my Grandfather Stebbins where I now reside. It describes the battle of Lake Erie. The first stanza which I recall runs thus:—

“The tenth of September let us remember
 So long as the globe on its axis rolls round,
 Our tars and marines on Lake Erie were seen,
 To make the proud flag of Great Britain come down.”

For reasons which will appear I would like to comment upon another stanza:—

“There is one gallant act of our noble Commander
 While writing my song I must notice with pride,
 While launched in the boat that carried the standard,
 A ball whistled through her just close by his side.
 Says Perry, ‘The rascals intend for to drown us;
 But push on, my brave boys, you never need fear,’
 And with his own coat he plugged up the boat,
 And through fire and sulphur away he did steer.”

This stanza contains the only record I have found of Perry’s boat being struck by a single missile from the enemy while on its perilous passage from the *Lawrence* to the *Niagara*. But I think we may safely consider it as history. Could it by any possibility have been an invention!

It is indeed a miracle that this little boat and its crew escaped total destruction, but such is the established fact.

A third stanza that I recall relates to Perry taking possession of the *Niagara* where he hoisted his motto flag:—

“The famed *Niagara* now proud of her Perry
 Displayed all her banners in gallant array,
 And twenty-five guns on her deck she did carry,
 Which soon put an end to this bloody affray.”

In all other accounts of this conflict the *Niagara* is rated as a 20-gun vessel, and there can be no doubt about the truth of this statement. For fear, however, that the writer of my song may be accused of telling a wrong story, I will dwell a little upon this point.

It appears that the habit of adding extra guns to the regularly rated number had become at this period an almost universal custom. There is sufficient evidence to prove this fact beyond the shadow of a doubt.

In trustworthy records we read, here and there, that the *Constitution* rated at 44 guns, carried 54; the *Pelican*, rated at 18, carried 21; the *Argus*, 16, carried 20; the *Essex*, 32, carried 46; the *Java*, 38, carried 49; and so on.

My old song was written very soon after the event occurred. The writer should have known what he was writing about. Evidently he took some little liberty as a poetical license in the pronunciation of the word *Niagara*, but he could have no possible object in misstating the facts. Extra guns were placed in all available positions. I find one long-nine projecting from a cabin window. There were guns on the main deck, the bulwarks being cut away for their operation; guns on the poop and even on the quarter deck, and two thrust through the bridle ports, etc.

I have not the slightest doubt that we are justified, on the strength of our old song, and the above facts, in adding to our list the *Niagara*, rated 20 guns, carrying 25. She would be doing only as most of her sisters did when she augmented her force by the addition of five guns.

WAR OF 1815.

I wish to close this paper with a few brief remarks concerning the War of 1815.

Within the circle of my acquaintance I have yet to meet a single individual who knows that we had a War in 1815.

The Barbary states—Algiers, Morocco, Tunis and Tripoli—had dominated the naval world for three hundred years, as I have already said, and during the late war with England these states had been aggressive and insolent. Peace having been declared with Great Britain, Dec. 1814, America was now at liberty to settle old scores with the Barbary states, and March 2, 1815, formerly declared war against this piratical crew.

Commodore Stephen Decatur was sent with a squadron to the Mediterranean with directions to enforce a treaty of peace, to claim payment for certain damages, and to set all American captives free from Algerine slavery without ransom.

This treaty, as it was uniformly called, with its twenty-two distinct articles, had been formulated in all its details by President Madison, and prepared for the Dey's signature, as

the head of the Barbary Confederacy. This was rather an unique proceeding—the diplomacy being all on one side, but Madison had reached that point where patience ceased to be a virtue, and he had no scruples in dealing with these sea-robbers with a mailed hand.

Decatur had this great advantage. The Algerines had imbibed the late popular estimate of the American sailors. Our reputation as fighters had been established across the seas. This is shown by the following extract from a contemporaneous letter:—

“You have no idea of the respect which the American character has gained by our late wars. The Spaniards, especially, think we are devils incarnate, as we beat the English, who beat the French, who beat them, whom nobody have beat before—and the Algerines whom the devil himself could not beat”

Decatur was held to be the representative of this power with means to back his demands. On his arrival in the harbor of Algiers he hoisted the Swedish flag. The Swedish Consul in Algiers responded and came off in his own boat; all the early communications with the Dey were carried on under the Swedish flag.

Decatur bearded the lion in his very den by sending to the Dey a copy of the treaty of peace, demanding his signature; in default of which, direful things would happen, giving notice at the same time that two of his own war vessels had already been captured. The Dey was not unacquainted with Decatur and his methods. He could not have forgotten the part played by this hero in the fate of the *Philadelphia*, and all the world recognized the Commodore as one of that brilliant galaxy which created such a commotion in England during the War of 1812. The name of Decatur's flagship, the *Guerriere*, could not have suggested pleasant recollections, and the Dey plainly read his doom in the stars and stripes spangling the bay. He lost no time in sending word by his agents that if Commodore Decatur would come ashore all matters would be discussed and arranged.

Decatur's prompt response was,

“All discussions must be on board my flagship.”

At this time the Dey was expecting the return of several ships which might appear at any moment, and he immediately made arrangements, and authorized agents were hurriedly sent on board the flagship; the agents begged that a flag of truce be hoisted and hostilities suspended for three hours pending negotiations.

Decatur replied, "Not a minute. If your squadron appears in sight before the treaty is actually signed by the Dey, and the prisoners sent on board, ours would capture them."

As the examination of the articles of the treaty proceeded, the agents suggested certain alterations in the text. Decatur finally told them not one single word in any of the articles would be changed; perforce the demands of each article were agreed to, one by one, and the treaty was sent by Decatur to the Dey, for his official signature.

Meanwhile the Dey, clearly foreseeing the result of Decatur's visit, made himself busy in preparing for the return of the agents, by counting out the needful wherewith to settle all claims, by releasing the bewildered captives from slavish bonds, and gathering them together on the wharf. Once here the captives saw, in place of the baleful flag of their captors, the beloved stars and stripes brightly dotting the bay, and spelling out their own freedom. As they realized the new conditions the welkin must have rung with their shouts of ecstatic joy.

Although the distance to the Dey from the ship was fully five miles, the agents hurried back within three hours with the treaty signed and with the over-joyed captives. But before they arrived, Decatur's flag of truce had already gone up on observing a given signal, pursuant to an agreement with the Swedish Consul that the captives were in his hands, and all requirements fulfilled.

From that moment on June 21, the War of 1815 practically ended. In due time the treaty was ratified by Congress.

After Decatur had been on a little collecting tour to Tunis and Tripoli, picking up captives and settling claims, which were always promptly met, he turned his prow toward home with the signed treaty of peace in one hand, and in the other the released captives, and a fat pocket book containing, at least, \$81,000.

This treaty, we repeat, was unique in one respect. The party of the second part was never consulted as to any one of its twenty-two articles, and the Dey was forced to sign at the cannon's mouth. The treaty was drawn up by a skilled diplomat who had twenty years of political responsibility at his back, and its terms were so just and equitable that it settled for all time the political relations between the two countries.

Decatur had accomplished the work for which he was sent. President Madison had surely selected a fit man for his purpose.

The concessions of the trembling Dey to the invincible Decatur ended forever the reign of terror of the piratical Algerines. Great Britain, which had paid an annual humiliating tribute for unnumbered years, took courage, and the next summer, joined by the Dutch fleet, followed the example of the United States in demanding similar treatment, and the same was done by all of the other naval powers.

But this great achievement was the work of the American Navy, under President Madison, and the whole naval world should pay due honor to our heroes.

This Navy from the first battle of the War of 1812, to the close of the War of 1815, was inspired by the same spirit which found fitting expression in the undying words of Capt. James Lawrence:

“Don't Give up the Ship.”





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