CYRUS BRADY

COMMODORE PAUL JONES

Cyrus Brady
Commodore Paul Jones

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=23157539
Commodore Paul Jones:

Содержание

Cyrus Townsend Brady
Commodore Paul Jones

PREFACE

In preparing this work I began, I admit, with an ardent admiration for John Paul Jones, born of long study of his career. I have endeavored, however, so far as possible, to lay aside my preconceived opinions and predisposition in his favor, and I have conscientiously gone over the immense mass of material bearing upon him, *de novo*, in an attempt to be absolutely and strictly impartial. Perhaps I have not altogether succeeded, but if it be found that I have erred in Jones' favor, I shall be glad that I have followed the impulses of affection rather than those of depreciation. I have not, I trust, been blind to the faults in the character of the great sailor, nor to the mistakes he committed, nor to the wrongdoings in his career to which I have called attention; but, in spite of these things, which I have most reluctantly recorded, I am happy that renewed investigation, careful study, and much thought have only endeared him the more to me. I lay down the pen with a higher respect, with a more affectionate regard, with a greater admiration for him than ever.

In Miss Seawell's fine phrase, "It may be said of him as of the great Condé: 'This man was born a captain.'" His place among

the great sea kings as a strategist, a tactician, and a fighter is now unquestioned by the most calumnious of his defamers; but the wound he inflicted upon British pride still rankles after the lapse of more than a century, and his professional status and personal character are still bitterly aspersed. So doth prejudice blind the eyes of truth. I have devoted some space to the old charge that he was a pirate, which was renewed recently in an article in the London Academy, one of the leading journals of England, and I trust that the reader will find that I have finally disposed of that absurd statement, and the other slanders concerning him, in these pages. And I have tried to be fair to the enemy as well.

Wherever it has been possible, without clogging the narrative or letting it assume the form of a mere collection of letters, Paul the sailor, like Paul the Apostle, hath been permitted to speak for himself. Contrary to some of his biographers, I have made it a rule to accept Jones' own statements unless they were controverted by adequate evidence. It is proper to call attention to the fact that the intent of the series, of which this is one, which deals primarily with the subjects of the different volumes as great commanders, naturally emphasizes their public exploits rather than their private life. This will account for a lack of amplification in certain directions, and for the omission of details of certain periods of his life which, were the circumstances other than they are, would probably be treated of at greater length. However, it is believed that enough appears in the pages to complete the picture and exhibit the man.

There is a great amount of matter available for the study of his life, in the shape of lives, essays, sketches, and general histories, and contemporary memoirs, and an immense mass of manuscript reports and correspondence, and Jones himself left several interesting accounts of his career and services, which are of great value to his biographers. I have freely used all sources of information to which I could gain access, and they have not been few. It will be only justice, however, if I acknowledge that among the authorities consulted I have found the excellent life by Commodore Alexander Slidell Mackenzie, U. S. N., published in 1841, the most useful. Mackenzie was an officer and seaman of wide experience and fine talents, whose life covered the period of our naval development succeeding the War of 1812, and his comments from a sailor's point of view are instructive and invaluable. His work is marred by an unfortunate bias against Jones, which appears in several instances; in a desire to be accurate and just he has gone to a censurable extreme. Two other books have been most helpful: the life by John Henry Sherburne, sometime Register of the United States Navy, published in 1825, with its valuable collection of reports of participants in different actions, and statements and official documents not otherwise preserved; and the life compiled from the manuscript furnished by Miss Janette Taylor, a niece of the great commodore, published in 1830. I may also add that I have found Captain Mahan's admirable papers upon the subject, in Scribner's Magazine, of great value. Indeed,

there are facts, observations, and deductions in these articles which appear nowhere else, so sure is the touch of a genius for historical accuracy and investigation like his. Among other essayists, Miss Molly Elliott Seawell, whose facile pen has done so much to exploit our early naval heroes, has written a notable and interesting paper which appeared in the Century Magazine; while Professor John Knox Laughton, the English naval expert, in his celebrated but scandalous and utterly unjustifiable attack, gives us a modern British estimate of the commodore. I shall pay my respects to his contribution later. No extended life has been published for fifty years.

My thanks are due to General Horace Porter and the Honorable Charlemagne Tower, LL.D., ambassadors of the United States to France and Russia respectively, for investigations in answers to inquiries, and for suggestions; to Dr. Talcott Williams, of Philadelphia, for valuable suggestions as to sources of possible information; to the Rev. Dr. William Elliot Griffis, of Ithaca, New York, for much interesting matter connected with the Baron van der Capellen, for unpublished manuscript notes on North Holland, the Helder, and the Texel, and for the rare copy of the old Dutch song, "Hir komt Pauwel Jones aan," which appears in the appendix; to Lieutenant-General O. V. Stubendorff, Chief of the Topographical Section of the Imperial Russian General Staff, and to Major-General E. Sarantchof, of the Russian army, for maps, reports, and other data concerning the campaign on the Dnieper-Liman, not

accessible in any American books; to Mr. Charles T. Harbeck, of New York, for generous permission to make use of rare books and pamphlets relating to Paul Jones in his valuable collection of Americana; to Messrs. W. M. Cumming and Junius Davis, of Wilmington, N. C., and Mrs. A. I. Robertson, of Columbia, S. C., for information concerning the assumption of the name of Jones by John Paul, not hitherto published in book form; to Mr. E. G. McCollin and the Misses Mabel S. Meredith, Edith Lanigan, and Bertha T. Rivailles for much important work in translation; and to Miss Isabel Paris for invaluable assistance in transcribing the manuscript.

Lest any of the above should be involved in possible criticisms which may be made of the book, I beg to close this preface with the assurance that for everything which follows I alone am responsible.

Cyrus Townsend Brady.
Philadelphia, Pa., July, 1900.

CHAPTER I
ANCESTRY-BIRTH-EARLY YEARS-PROFESSION-SUCCESS-CHANGE OF NAME

Of the three great captains whose magnificent fighting has added such glorious chapters to the history of our naval campaigns, but one, George Dewey, the last of them all, is purely an American by birth and generations of ancestors. Farragut, the greatest of the three, was but one remove from a Spaniard. John Paul Jones, first of the group in point of time and not inferior to the others in quality and achievement, was a Scotsman. Only the limitation in means necessitated by the narrow circumstances of his adopted country during his lifetime prevented his surpassing them all. He remains to this day a unique character among the mighty men who trod the deck and sailed the ocean-a strange personality not surpassed by any in the long line of sea fighters from Themistocles to Sampson. In spite of, nay, because of his achievements, he was among the most calumniated of men. What follows is an attempt to tell his story and to do him justice.

Near the close of the fifth decade of the eighteenth century, George I reigned in England, by the grace of God and because he had succeeded in putting down the rebellion of 1745; Frederick

the Great was tenaciously clutching the fair province of Silesia which Maria Theresa, with equal resolution but with faint prospect of success, was endeavoring to retain; Louis XV (the well beloved!) was exploiting the privileges and opportunities of a king with Madame de Pompadour and the *Parc aux Cerfs*; and the long war of the Austrian succession was just drawing to a close, when there was born on July 6, 1747, to a Scots peasant, named John Paul, and to Jean MacDuff, his wife, a son, the fifth child of a large family.[1]

The youngster was duly christened John Paul, Junior, after his sire. He is the hero of this history. He first saw the light on the estate of Arbigland, in the parish of Kirkbean, in the county of Kirkcudbright, a province once called the Royal Stewartry of Kirkcudbright (pronounced "Kircoobree"), because it had been governed formerly by a steward or deputy, appointed by the crown, of which the county had been an appanage.

---

[1] Among the gross slanders by which envy strove to blacken the fame of the great commodore in after years-the foulest, because it attempted to rob a virtuous woman of her crown of honest motherhood and question the legitimacy of Jones' birth-was one which ascribed his paternity to the Earl of Selkirk. To the English snob of that day it may probably have seemed impossible that so much greatness could spring from so plain a stock, and in a left-handed descent from Lord Selkirk was sought an explanation of Jones' fame. The calumny was refuted not only by its antecedent incredibility, but by the testimony of persons in position to affirm as to the high personal character of Jean MacDuff Paul and by the loving and tender family relationship she ever sustained to her husband and children. The family was well known and highly respected. It may be noted, by the way, that the Earl of Selkirk was not conspicuous for ability or anything else, and if it had not been for a subsequent exploit of Jones' he would have been forgotten long since.

The father of the subject of this memoir filled the modest situation of a master gardener, a precursor of the modern and scientific landscape gardener, or engineer, in a small scale, in the employ of a Scots bonnet laird named Craik. His remote family-peasants, yeomen always-had come from the ancient lands of the Thanes of Fife, whence his grandfather had removed to Leith, where he kept a mail garden or wayside inn-in short, a tavern. It is to the credit of Master John Paul, Senior-evidently a most honest and capable man in that humble station in life into which it had pleased God to call him-that he forsook the tavern and clung to the garden. When he had finished his apprenticeship as gardener he removed to Arbigland, where he married Jean MacDuff, the daughter of a sturdy yeoman farmer of the neighboring parish of New Abbey, whose family had been established in their present location from time immemorial.

The marriage was blessed with seven children, the two youngest sons dying in infancy. The first was a boy named William; the next three were girls, named Elizabeth, Janet, and Mary Ann; and the fifth and last, considering the death of the infants, the boy named John, after his father. *En passant*, there must have been something favorable to the development of latent possibilities in gardeners' sons in that corner of Scotland, for in the neighboring county of Ayr, a few years later was born of similar bucolic stock the son of another tiller of the soil, known to fame as Robbie Burns!

The cottage in which young Paul made his first appearance

was a little stone building in a verdant glade in a thriving wood hard by the north shore of the Solway. In front of the cottage whose whitewashed walls were in full view of the ships which entered the Firth there was a patch of greensward. The country of that section of bonnie Scotland in which is the parish of Arbigland is rugged and broken. To the east and to the west, huge, craggy mountains shut in a thickly wooded plateau, diversified by clear, rapid streams abounding in fish. The fastnesses in the hills even then were covered with romantic ruins of decayed strongholds of feudal times, reminiscent of the days of the Black Douglasses and their men. The coast line, unusually stern and bold, is broken by many precipitous inlets, narrow and deep. At the foot of the cliffs at low tide broad stretches of sand are exposed to view, and the rapid rise of the tide makes these shelving beaches dangerous places upon which to linger. The water deepens abruptly beyond the beaches, and vessels under favorable circumstances are enabled to approach near the shore.

Amid such scenes as these the childhood of young Paul was passed. Like every thrifty Scots boy of the period, he had plenty of work to do in assisting his mother and father. The life of a Scots peasant of that time was one of hard and incessant toil; his recreations were few, his food meager, his opportunities limited, and the luxuries absent. Young John Paul ate his porridge and did his work like the rest. It would probably now be considered a sad and narrow life, which the stern and rigid austerity of the prevailing form of Calvinism did nothing to lighten. That gloomy

religion, however, did produce men.

It was the parish school which shaped and molded the minds of the growing Scots, and it was the Kirk which shaped and directed the schools, and the one was not more thorough than the other. I doubt if anywhere on earth at that day was the standard of education among the common people higher and more universally reached than in Scotland. During the short school year Paul was sent religiously to the nearest parish school, where he was well grounded in the rudiments of solid learning with the thoroughness which made these little schools famous. No demands of labor were allowed to interfere with the claims of education. On Sunday he was religiously and regularly marched to the kirk to be duly inducted into the mysteries of the catechism, and thoroughly indoctrinated with the theory of predestination and its rigorous concomitants.

Of him, as of other boys, it is veraciously stated that he conceived a great fondness for the sea, and it is related that all his plays were of ships and sailors-a thing easily understood when it is remembered that his most impressionable hours were spent in sight and sound of the great deep, and that the white sails of ships upon the horizon were quite as familiar a picture to his youthful vision as the tree-clad hills and valleys of his native land. It is evident that he had no fancy for the garden. A man of action he, from his bib-and-tucker days. His chroniclers have loved to call attention to the fact that even as a lad he manifested the spirit of one born to rule, for in the sports and games it was his will which

dominated his little group of comrades-and the Scotsman, even when he is a child, is not easily dominated, be it remembered. His was a healthy, vigorous boyhood.

His desire for the sea must have been stronger than the evanescent feeling which finds a place sooner or later in the life of most boys, for in 1759, with the full consent of his parents, he crossed the Solway to Whitehaven, the principal port of the Firth, where he was regularly bound apprentice to a merchant named Younger, who was engaged in the American trade. He was immediately sent to sea on the ship Friendship, Captain Benson, and at the tender age of twelve years he made his first voyage to the new land toward whose freedom and independence he was afterward destined to contribute so much. The destination of the ship happened to be the Rappahannock River. As it fortunately turned out, his elder brother, William, had some years before migrated to Virginia, where he had married and settled at Fredericksburg, and by his industry and thrift finally amassed a modest fortune. Young Paul at once conceived a great liking for America which never faltered; long afterward he stated that he had been devoted to it from his youth.

The ship duties in port not being arduous, the young apprentice, through the influence of his brother, was permitted to spend the period of the vessel's stay in America on shore under the roof of his kinsman. There he continued his studies with that zeal for knowledge which was one of his distinguishing characteristics, and which never left him in after life; for it is

to be noted that he was always a student; indeed, had he not been so, his subsequent career would have been impossible. It was largely that habit of application, early acquired, that enabled him to advance himself beyond his original station. He especially applied himself to the science of navigation, the intricacies of which he speedily mastered, so that he became subsequently one of the most expert navigators that sailed the sea.

His natural inclination for the sea stood him in good stead, and he finally acquired a complete knowledge of the details of his trying profession. Upon the failure of Mr. Younger, who surrendered the indentures of young Paul to him as the only thing he could do for him in his present circumstances, he was sufficiently capable to receive an appointment as third mate on the slaver King George, of Whitehaven. A few years after, in 1766, being then but nineteen years of age, he was appointed to the most responsible position of chief mate of the slaver Two Friends, a brigantine of Jamaica. The contrast between the old and the new *régime* is brought vividly before us when we learn that to-day a cadet midshipman-the lowest naval rank at present-of the same age has still a year of schooling to undergo before he can even undertake the two years' probationary cruise at sea required before he can be commissioned in the lowest grade.

Slave trading was a popular and common vocation in that day, not reprehended as it would be at present. Gentlemen of substance and station did not scruple to engage in it, either as providing money and receiving profit, or as actually participating

as master or supercargo of ships in the traffic. It is interesting to note that young Paul, as he grew in years and acquired character, became intensely dissatisfied with slaving. The sense of the cruelties, iniquities, and injustice of the trade developed in him with coming manhood, and gradually took such possession of him that, as was stated by his relatives and himself, he finally resolved to withdraw from it.

This determination, scarcely to be expected from one of his birth and circumstances, was greatly to his credit. The business itself was a most stirring and lucrative one, and for a young man to have attained the rank he enjoyed so early in life was evidence that he need have no fear but that the future would bring him further advancement and corresponding pecuniary reward. In this decision he was certainly in advance of his time as well; but that love of liberty which had been bred in him by the free air of the bold hills of his native land, and which afterward became the master passion of his life, for which he drew his sword, was undoubtedly heightened and intensified by this close personal touch with the horrors of involuntary servitude.

In the year 1768, therefore, giving up his position on the Two Friends, he sailed as a passenger in the brigantine John, bound for Kirkcudbright. It happened that the captain and mate of the vessel both died of fever during the voyage, and at the request of the crew Paul assumed command and brought the vessel safely to her port. Currie, Beck & Co., the owners of the John, were so pleased with this exploit that they appointed young Paul master

and supercargo of the vessel, in which he made two voyages to the West Indies. He was a captain, therefore, and a merchant at the age of twenty-one. The owners of the John dissolved partnership on the completion of his second voyage, and disposed of the ship, giving Paul the following honorable certificate upon his discharge from their employ:

"These do certify to whom it may concern, that the bearer, Captain John Paul, was two voyages master of a vessel called the John, in our employ in the West India trade, during which time he approved himself every way qualified both as a navigator and supercargo; but as our present firm is dissolved, the vessel was sold, and of course he is out of our employ, all accounts between him and the owners being amicably adjusted. Certified at Kirkcudbright this 1st April, 1771.

"Currie, Beck & Co."

One incident in his West Indian service is worthy of mention, because it afterward crept out in a very ugly manner. On the second voyage of the John the carpenter, a man named Mungo Maxwell, formerly of Kirkcudbright, who had been mutinous, was severely flogged by the order of Paul. Maxwell was discharged at the island of Tobago. He immediately caused Paul to be summoned before the judge of the vice-admiralty court for assault. The judge, after hearing the testimony and statement of Captain Paul, dismissed the complaint as frivolous. Maxwell subsequently entered on a Barcelona packet, and in a voyage of the latter ship from Tobago to Antigua died of a fever.

Out of this was built up a calumny to the effect that Maxwell had been so badly punished by Paul that he died from his injuries. When Paul was in the Russian service years afterward the slander was enhanced by the statement that Maxwell was his nephew. There was nothing whatever in the charge.

After his retirement from the command of the John he engaged in local trading with the Isle of Man. It has been charged that he was a smuggler during this period; but he specifically and vehemently denied the allegation, and it is certain that the first entry of goods shipped from England to the Isle of Man, after it was annexed to the crown, stands in his name on the custom-house books of the town of Douglas. Soon after this he commanded a ship, the Betsy, of London, in the West India trade, in which he engaged in mercantile speculations on his own account at Tobago and Grenada, until the year 1773, when he went to Virginia again to take charge of the affairs of his brother William, who had died intestate, leaving neither wife nor children.

Very little is known of his life from this period until his entry into the public service of the United States. From remarks in his journal and correspondence, it is evident, in spite of his brother's property, to which he was heir, and some other property and money which he had amassed by trading, which was invested in the island of Tobago, West Indies, that he continued for some time in very straitened circumstances. He speaks of having lived for nearly two years on the small sum of fifty pounds. It is

probable that his poverty was due to his inability to realize upon his brother's estate, and the difficulty of getting a return of his West Indian investments, on account of the unsettled political conditions, though they were of considerable value. During this period, however, he took that step which has been a puzzle to so many of his biographers, and which he never explained in any of his correspondence that remains. He came to America under the name of John Paul; he reappeared after this period of obscurity under the name of John Paul Jones.

It is claimed by the descendants of the Jones family of North Carolina that while in Fredericksburg the young mariner made the acquaintance of the celebrated Willie (pronounced Wylie) Jones, one of the leading attorneys and politicians of North Carolina. Jones and his brother Allen were people of great prominence and influence in that province. It was Jones' influence, by the way, which in later years postponed the ratification of the proposed Constitution of the United States by North Carolina. Willie Jones seems to have attended to the legal side of Paul's claims to his deceased brother's estate, and a warm friendship sprang up between the two young men, so dissimilar in birth and breeding, which, it is alleged, ended in an invitation to young Paul to visit Jones and his brother on their plantations.

The lonely, friendless little Scotsman gratefully accepted the invitation-the society of gentle people always delighted him; he ever loved to mingle with great folk throughout his life-and passed a long period at "The Grove," in Northampton

County, the residence of Willie, and at "Mount Gallant," in Halifax County, the home of Allen. While there, he was thrown much in the society of the wife of Willie Jones, a lady noted and remembered for her graces of mind and person, and who, by the way, made the famous answer to Tarleton's sneer-wholly unfounded, of course-at the gallant Colonel William A. Washington for his supposed illiteracy. Morgan and Washington had defeated Tarleton decisively at the Cowpens, and in the course of the action Washington and Tarleton had met in personal encounter. Washington had severely wounded Tarleton in the hand. The Englishman had only escaped capture by prompt flight and the speed of his horse. "Washington," said the sneering partisan to Mrs. Jones, "why, I hear he can't even write his name!" "No?" said the lady quietly and interrogatively, letting her eyes fall on a livid scar across Tarleton's hand, "Well, he can make his mark, at any rate."

The Jones brothers were men of culture and refinement. They were Eton boys, and had completed their education by travel and observation in Europe. That they should have become so attached to the young sailor as to have made him their guest for long periods, and cherished the highest regard for him subsequently, is an evidence of the character and quality of the man. Probably for the first time in his life Paul was introduced to the society of refined and cultivated people. A new horizon opened before him, and he breathed, as it were, another atmosphere. Life for him assumed a different complexion. Always an interesting

personality, with his habits of thought, assiduous study, coupled with the responsibilities of command, he needed but a little contact with gentle people and polite society to add to his character those graces of manner which are the final crown of the gentleman, and which the best of his contemporaries have borne testimony he did not lack. The impression made upon him by the privilege of this association was of the deepest, and he gave to his new friends, and to Mrs. Jones especially, a warm-hearted affection and devotion amounting to veneration.

It is not improbable, also, that in the society in which he found himself-and it must be remembered that North Carolina was no less fervidly patriotic, no less desirous of independence, than Massachusetts: it was at Mecklenburg that the first declaration took place-the intense love of personal liberty and independence in his character which had made him abandon the slave trade was further developed, and that during this period he finally determined to become a resident of the new land; a resolution that made him cast his lot with the other colonists when the inevitable rupture came about.

It is stated that in view of this determination on his part to begin life anew in this country, and as a mark of the affection and gratitude he entertained for the family of his benefactors, he assumed the name of Jones. It was a habit in some secluded parts of Scotland and in Wales to take the father's Christian name as a surname also, and this may have been in his mind at the time. He did not assume the name of Jones, however, out

of any disregard for his family or from any desire to disguise himself from them, for, although he last saw them in 1771, he ever continued in correspondence with them, and found means, whatever his circumstances, to make them frequent remittances of money during his busy life. To them he left all his property at his death. It is certain, therefore, that for no reason for which he had cause to be ashamed did he affix the name of Jones to his birth name, and it may be stated that whatever name he took he honored. Henceforth in this volume he will be known by the name which he made so famous.[2]

One other incident of this period is noteworthy. During his visit to North Carolina he was introduced by the Jones brothers to Joseph Hewes, of Edenton, one of the delegates from North Carolina to the first and second Provincial Congresses, and a signer of the great Declaration of Independence. In Congress Hewes was a prominent member of the Committee on Naval Affairs, upon which devolved the work of beginning and carrying on the navy of the Revolution. When the war broke out Paul Jones was still living in Virginia. But when steps were taken to organize a navy for the revolted colonies, attracted by the opportunities presented in that field of service in which he was a master, and glad of the chance for maintaining a cause so congenial to his habit of life and thought, he formally tendered his services to his adopted country. The influence of Willie Jones and Hewes was secured, and on the 7th of December, 1775,

[2] See Appendix I.

Jones was appointed a lieutenant in the new Continental navy.

Additional note on the assumption of the name of Jones

Mr. Augustus C. Buell, in his exhaustive and valuable study of Paul Jones, published since this book was written, states that the name was assumed by him in testamentary succession to his brother, who had added the name of Jones at the instance of a wealthy planter named William Jones, who had adopted him. Mr. Buell's authority rests on tradition and the statements made by Mr. Louden, a great-grandnephew of the commodore (since dead), and of the sometime owner of the Jones plantation. On the other hand, in addition to the letters quoted in the Appendix, I have received many others from different sources, tending to confirm the version given by me. Among them is one from a Fredericksburg antiquarian, who claims that William Paul never bore the name of Jones in Fredericksburg. General Cadwallader Jones (who died in 1899, aged eighty-six), in a privately published biography, also states explicitly that he heard the story from Mrs. Willie Jones herself. Mr. Buell, in a recent letter to me, calls attention to the fact-and it is significant-that absolutely no reference to the North Carolina claim appears in any extant letter of the commodore, and claims that Hewes and Jones were acquainted before John Paul settled in America. As the official records have all been destroyed, the matter of the

name will probably never be absolutely determined.

CHAPTER II
COMMISSIONED IN THE NAVY-HOISTS THE FIRST FLAG-EXPEDITION TO NEW PROVIDENCE-ENGAGEMENT WITH THE GLASGOW

The honor of initiative in the origin of the American navy belongs to Rhode Island, a doughty little State which, for its area, possesses more miles of seaboard than any other. On Tuesday, October 3, 1775, the delegates from Rhode Island introduced in the Continental Congress a resolution which had been passed by the General Assembly of the province on August 26th of the same year, in which, among other things, the said delegates were instructed to "use their whole influence, at the ensuing Congress, for building, at the Continental expense, a fleet of sufficient force for the protection of these colonies, and for employing them in such manner and places as will most effectually annoy our enemies, and contribute to the common defense of these colonies."

Consideration of the resolution was twice postponed, but it was finally discussed on the 7th of October and referred to a

committee. On the 13th of October the committee reported, and Congress so far accepted the Rhode Island suggestion that the following resolution was passed:

"*Resolved*, That a swift sailing vessel, to carry ten carriage guns and a proportionate number of swivels with eighty men, be fitted with all possible dispatch for a cruise of three months, and that the commander be instructed to cruise eastward for intercepting such transports as may be laden with warlike stores and other supplies for our enemies, and for such other purposes as the Congress shall direct." Another vessel was also ordered fitted out for the same purpose.

Messrs. Deane, Langden, and Gadsden were appointed a committee to carry out the instructions embodied in the resolution. When the committee submitted a report, on the 30th of October, it was further resolved "that the second vessel ordered to be fitted out on the 13th inst. be of such size as to carry fourteen guns and a proportionate number of swivels and men." Two other vessels were also ordered to be put into service, one to carry not more than twenty and the other not more than thirty-six guns, "for the protection and defense of the United Colonies, as the Congress shall direct."

This may be considered as the real and actual beginning of the American navy. There had been numerous naval encounters between vessels of war of the enemy and private armed vessels acting under the authority of the various colonies; and Washington himself, with the approval of the Congress, which

passed some explicit resolutions on the subject on October 5th, had made use of the individual colonial naval forces, and had issued commissions to competent men empowering them to cruise and intercept the transports and other vessels laden with powder and supplies for the enemy, but no formal action looking to the creation of a regular naval force had been taken heretofore.

Congress had long clung to the hope of reconciliation with the mother country, and had been exceedingly loath to take the radical step involved in the establishment of a navy, for in the mind of the Anglo-Saxon, who always claimed supremacy on the sea, a navy is primarily for offense. To constitute a navy for defense alone is to invite defeat. Aggression and initiative are of the essence of success in war on the sea. Now, in the peculiar condition in which the United Colonies found themselves, a naval force could be used for no other purpose than offense. The capacity of any navy which the colonies could hope to create, for defensive warfare, would be so slender as to be not worth the outlay, and the creation of a navy to prey upon the enemy's commerce and to take such of his armed vessels as could be overcome would controvert the fiction that we were simply resisting oppression. It would be making war in the most unmistakable way.

It is a singular thing that men have been willing to do, or condone the doing of, things on land which they have hesitated to do or condone on the sea. The universal diffusion of such sentiments is seen in the absurdly illogical contention on the part

of the British Government subsequently, that, although a soldier on land was a rebel, he could be treated as a belligerent; while a man who stood in exactly the same relation to the King of England whose field of action happened to be the sea was of necessity a pirate.

At any rate, by the acts of Congress enumerated, a navy was assembled, and the plan of Rhode Island was adopted. It was Rhode Island, by the way, which, by preamble and resolution, sundered its allegiance to Great Britain just two months to a day before the Declaration of Independence. To the naval committee already constituted, Stephen Hopkins, Richard Henry Lee, John Adams, and Joseph Hewes were soon added. The committee at once undertook the work of carrying out the instructions they had received. On the 5th of November they selected for the command of the proposed navy Esek Hopkins, of Rhode Island, a brother of the famous Stephen Hopkins who was a member of the committee and one of the most influential members of the Congress. Other officers were commissioned from time to time as selections were made, and commissions and orders were issued to them by the committee, subject, of course, to the ratification or other action by the Congress. Paul Jones' commission as a lieutenant, as has been stated, was dated the 7th of December, 1775.

Esek Hopkins, who was born in 1718, was therefore fifty-seven years of age. He had been a master mariner for thirty years. He was a man of condition and substance who had traded

in his own ships in all the then visited parts of the globe. As a commander of privateers and letters of marque he was not without experience in arms. He had been created a brigadier general of the Rhode Island militia on the threatened outbreak of hostilities, a position he resigned to take command of the navy. On the 22d of December Congress confirmed the nomination of Hopkins as commander-in-chief, and regularly appointed the following officers:

Captains:	Dudley Saltonstall, Abraham Whipple, Nicholas Biddle, John Burroughs Hopkins.	First Lieutenants:	John Paul Jones, Rhodes Arnold, — Stansbury, Hoysted Hacker, Jonathan Pitcher.
Second Lieutenants:	Benjamin Seabury, Joseph Olney, Elisha Warner, Thomas Weaver, — McDougall.	Third Lieutenants:	John Fanning, Ezekiel Burroughs, Daniel Vaughan.

These were, therefore, the forerunners of that long line of distinguished naval officers who have borne the honorable commission of the United States.

In addition to the regular course pursued, other action bearing upon the subject of naval affairs was had. On Saturday, November, 25th, Congress, enraged by the burning of Falmouth, adopted radical resolutions, looking toward the capture and confiscation of armed British vessels and transports, directing the issuance of commissions to the captains of cruisers and privateers, and creating admiralty courts and prescribing a scheme for distributing prize money. On November 28th resolutions prescribing "Regulations for the Government of the Navy of the United Colonies" were adopted, the first appearance of that significant phrase in the records, by the way.

On December 5th the seizure of merchant vessels engaging in trade between the Tories of Virginia and the West Indies under the inspiration of Lord Dunmore, was ordered. On December 11th a special committee to devise ways and means for "furnishing these colonies with a naval armament" was appointed. Two days later the report of the committee was adopted, and thirteen ships were ordered built, five of thirty-two, five of twenty-eight, and three of twenty-four guns. They were to be constructed one in New Hampshire, two in Massachusetts, one in Connecticut, two in Rhode Island, two in New York, four in Pennsylvania, and one in Maryland; the maximum cost of each of them was sixty-six thousand six hundred and sixty-six dollars and sixty-six and two thirds cents. They had a fine idea of accuracy in the construction corps of that day.

But, while Congress had been therefore preparing to build the navy, the regular marine committee had not been idle. By strenuous effort the committee assembled a squadron. A merchant vessel called the Black Prince, which had lately arrived from London under the command of John Barry (afterward a famous American commodore), was purchased and renamed the Alfred, after King Alfred the Great, who is commonly believed to be the founder of the British navy. She was a small, stanch trading vessel, very heavily timbered, and with unusually stout scantlings for a ship of her class, although of course not equal to a properly constructed ship of war. The committee armed her with twenty 9-pounders on the main deck, and four smaller guns,

possibly 6- or 4-pounders, on the forecastle and poop, and she was placed under the command of Captain Dudley Saltonstall. Jones, whose name stood first on the list of first lieutenants, was appointed her executive officer. Hopkins selected her for his flagship. Jones had been offered the command of one of the smaller vessels of the squadron, but elected to fill his present station, as presenting more opportunities for acquiring information and seeing service. His experience in armed vessels had been limited; he knew but little of the requirements of a man-of-war, and deemed he could best fit himself for that higher command to which he aspired and determined to deserve by beginning his service under older and more experienced officers-a wise decision.

The next important vessel was another converted merchantman, originally called the Sally, now named the Columbus, after the great discoverer. She was a full-rigged ship of slightly less force and armament than the Alfred, commanded by Captain Abraham Whipple, already distinguished in a privateering way. In addition to these there were two brigs called the Andrea Doria and the Cabot, commanded by Captains Nicholas Biddle and John Burroughs Hopkins, a son of the commander-in-chief. The Andrea Doria and Cabot carried fourteen 4-pounders each.

Hopkins arrived at Philadelphia in December, 1775, in the brig Katy, of the Rhode Island navy, which was at once taken into the Continental service and renamed the Providence, after

the commander's native town. She carried twelve light guns, 4-pounders. There were also secured a ten-gun schooner called the Hornet, and the Wasp and Fly, two eight-gun schooners or tenders, one of which Jones had refused. The work of outfitting these ships as generously as the meager resources of the colonies permitted had been carried on assiduously before the arrival of the commander-in-chief, whose first duty, when he reached Philadelphia, was formally to assume the command.

This assumption of command entailed the putting of the ships in commission by publicly reading the orders appointing the commodore, and assigning him to command, and hoisting and saluting the flags. The officers previously appointed had been proceeding somewhat irregularly, doubtless, by going on with their preparations prior to this important ceremony. At any rate, in the latter part of December, 1775, or the early part of January, 1776-the date not being clear, the authorities not only differing, but in no single case venturing upon a definite statement-all things having been made ready, Commodore Hopkins with his staff officers entered the commodore's barge, lying at the foot of Walnut Street, and was rowed to the flagship. The wharves and houses facing the river were crowded with spectators to witness so momentous a ceremony as the commissioning of the first American fleet.

It has been recorded that it was a bright, cold, clear winter morning. The barge picked its way among the floating ice cakes of the Delaware, and finally reached the Alfred. The commodore

mounted the side, followed by his staff, and was received with due honors in the gangway by the captain and his officers in such full dress as they could muster. The crew and the marines were drawn up in orderly ranks in the waist and on the quarter deck. After the reading of the commodore's commission and the orders assigning him to the command of the fleet, Captain Dudley Saltonstall nodded his head to John Paul Jones, his executive officer. The young Scotsman, with, I imagine, a heart beating rarely, stepped forward and received from the veteran quartermaster the end of the halliards, to which, in the shape of a neatly rolled-up ball, was bent a handsome yellow silk flag, bearing the representation of a rattlesnake about to strike (and perhaps a pine tree also), with the significant legend "Don't tread on me." With his own hands the young lieutenant hauled the rolled-up ensign to the masthead, and then, with a slight twitch, he broke the stops and there blew out in the morning breeze, before the eyes of the commodore, his officers, the men of the ships, and the delighted spectators on shore, the first flag that ever flew from a regularly commissioned war ship of the United Colonies. The grand union flag, a red and white striped ensign with the English cross in the canton, was also hoisted. The flags were saluted by the booming of cannon from the batteries of the ships, and with cheers from the officers and men of the squadron and the people on the shore, and thus the transaction was completed, and the navy of the United States began to be.

The ships were slight in force, their equipments meager and

deficient, and of inferior quality at best. The men had but little experience in naval warfare, and their officers scarcely much more. There were men of undoubted courage and capacity among them, however, and several to whom the profession of arms was not entirely new. At least two of them, Jones and Biddle, were to become forever famous for their fighting. Compared with the huge and splendid navy of England, the whole force was an unconsidered trifle, but it was a beginning, and not a bad one at that, as the mother country was to find out. The outfitting of the squadron was by no means complete, and, though the commodore with the others labored hard, the work proceeded slowly and with many hindrances and delays; it was never properly done. Then the ships were ice-bound in Delaware Bay, and it was not until nearly two months had elapsed that they were able to get to sea.

The principal difficulty in the rebellious colonies, from the standpoint of military affairs, was the scarcity of powder. There were guns in respectable numbers, but without powder they were necessarily useless. The powder mills of the colonies were few and far between, and their output was inadequate to meet the demand. It is now well known that although Washington maintained a bold front when he invested the British army in Boston, at times his magazines did not contain more than a round or two of powder for each of his guns. His position was a magnificent specimen of what in modern colloquialism would have been called a "bluff." There was, of course, but little powder

to spare for the improvised men-of-war, and most of what they had was borrowed from the colony of Pennsylvania. To get powder was the chief end of military men then.

On February 17, 1776, the little squadron cleared the capes of the Delaware, and before nightfall had disappeared from view beneath the southeast horizon. It appears that the orders were for Hopkins to sail along the coast toward the south, disperse Dunmore's squadron, which was marauding in Virginia, pick up English coasting vessels, and capture scattered English ships cruising between Pennsylvania and Georgia to break up the colonial coasting trade and capture colonial merchantmen. But it also appears from letters of the Marine Committee that another object of the expedition was the seizure of large stores of powder and munitions of warfare which had been allowed to accumulate at New Providence, in the Bahama group, and that Hopkins sailed with much discretion as to his undertaking and the means of carrying it out. The Bahama project was maintained as a profound secret between the naval committee and its commodore, the matter not being discussed in Congress even.

With that end in view the commander-in-chief, by orders published to the fleet before its departure, appointed the island of Abaco, one of the most northerly of the Bahama group, as a rendezvous for his vessels in case they became separated by the usual vicissitudes of the sea. The scattered ships were directed to make an anchorage off the southern part of the island, and

wait at least fourteen days for the other vessels to join them before cruising on their own account in such directions as in the judgment of their respective commanders would most annoy, harass, and damage the enemy.

Shortly after leaving the capes the squadron ran into a severe easterly gale off Hatteras, then, as now, one of the most dangerous points on the whole Atlantic seaboard. The ships beat up against it, and all succeeded in weathering the cape and escaping the dreaded perils of the lee shore. If lack of training prevented the officers from claiming to be naval experts, there were prime seamen among them at any rate. When the gale abated Hopkins cruised along the coast for a short time, meeting nothing of importance in the way of a ship. Rightly concluding that the fierce winter weather would have induced the enemy's vessels to seek shelter in the nearest harbors, and his cruise in that direction, if further continued, would be profitless, he squared away for the Bahamas, to carry out the second and secret part of his instructions.

It was for a long time alleged that he took this action on his own account, and one of the charges against him in the popular mind was disobedience of orders in so doing; but he was undoubtedly within his orders in the course which he took, and it is equally certain that the enterprise upon which he was about to engage was one in which more immediate profit would accrue to the colonies than in any other. He should be held not only guiltless in the matter, but awarded praise for his decision. On the 1st of

March the squadron, with the exception of the Hornet and the Fly, which had parted company in the gale, reached the island of Abaco, about forty miles to the northward of New Providence.

No part of the western hemisphere had been longer known than the Bahamas. Upon one of them Columbus landed. The principal island among them, not on account of its size, which was insignificant, but because it possessed a commodious and land-locked harbor, is the island of New Providence. No island in the great archipelago which forms the northeastern border of the Caribbean had enjoyed a more eventful history. From time immemorial it had been the haunt of the buccaneer and the pirate. From it had sailed many expeditions to ravage the Spanish Main. It had been captured and recaptured by the successive nationalities which had striven for domination in the Caribbean, and in their brutal rapacity had made a hell of every verdant tropic island which lifted itself in the gorgeous beauty peculiar to those latitudes, above the deep blue of that lambent sea. It had come finally and definitely under the English crown, and a civilized government had been established by the notorious Woodes Rogers, who was himself a sort of Jonathan Wild of the sea, but one remove-and that not a great one-from the gentry whose nests he broke up and whose ravages he had put down. It had been taken since then by the Spaniards, but had been restored to the British.

The town of Nassau, which lies upon the northern face of the island, is situated upon the side of a hill which slopes gently

down toward the water. The harbor, which is sufficiently deep to accommodate vessels drawing not more than twelve feet, is formed by a long island which lies opposite the town. There are two entrances to the harbor, only one of which was practicable for large ships, though both were open for small vessels. At the ends of the harbor, commanding each entrance, two forts had been erected: Fort Montague on the east and Fort Nassau on the west. Through culpable negligence, in spite of the quantity of military stores it contained, there was not a single regular soldier on the island at that time, and no preparations for defense had been made.

It was proposed to make the descent upon the western end of the island and then march up and take the town in the rear. Paul Jones, however, in the council which was held on the Alfred before the debarkation, pointed out the greater distance which the men would have to march in that case, the alarm which would be given by the passage of the ships, and advised that a landing be effected upon the eastern end of the island, whence the attack could be more speedily delivered, and, as the ships would not be compelled to advance, no previous alarm would be given. Hopkins demurred to this plan on the ground that no safe anchorage for the ships was afforded off the eastern end. The Alfred had taken two pilots from some coasting vessels which had been captured, and from them it was learned that about ten miles away was a small key which would afford the larger vessels safe anchorage. As Hopkins hesitated to trust the pilots,

Jones, at the peril of his commission, offered in conjunction with them to bring the ships up himself. His suggestions were agreed to, his offer accepted, and when the vicinity of the key was reached he took his station on the fore-topmast crosstrees of the Alfred. He had sailed in the West Indian waters many times, and was familiar with the look of the sea and the indications near the shore. With the assistance of the pilots, after a somewhat exciting passage, he succeeded in bringing all the ships to a safe anchorage. That he was willing to take the risk, and, having done so, successfully carry out the difficult undertaking, gives a foretaste of his bold and decisive character, and of his technical skill as well.

Preparations for attack were quickly made. Commodore Hopkins, having impressed some local schooners, loaded them with two hundred and fifty marines from the squadron, under the command of Captain Samuel Nichols, the ranking officer of the corps, and fifty seamen under the command of Lieutenant Thomas Weaver of the Cabot, and on March 2d the transports with this attacking force were dispatched to New Providence.[3] They were convoyed by the Providence and the Wasp, and a landing was effected under the cover of these two ships of war. Unfortunately, however, some of the other larger vessels got under way at the same time, and their appearance alarmed the town.

It never seems to have occurred to any one but Jones that the

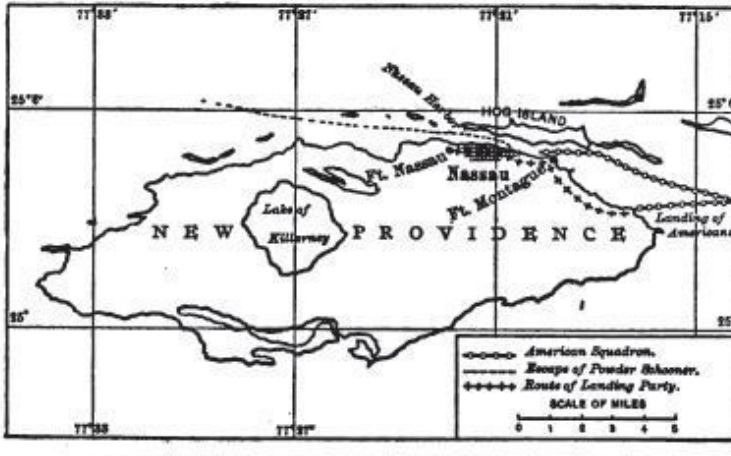
[3] The Marine Corps was established by the Congress November 10, 1775.

west exit from the harbor should be guarded by stationing two of the smaller vessels off the channel to close it while the rest of the squadron took care of the eastern end. It seems probable from his correspondence that he ventured upon the suggestion, for he specifically referred in condemnatory terms to the failure to do so. At any rate, if he did suggest it, and from his known capacity it is extremely likely that the obvious precaution would have occurred to him, his suggestion was disregarded, and the western pass from the harbor was left open-a fatal mistake.

The point where the expedition landed without opposition was some four and a half miles from Fort Montague. It was a bright Sunday morning when the first American naval brigade took up its march under Captain Nichols' orders. The men advanced steadily, and, though they were met by a discharge of cannon from Fort Montague, they captured the works by assault without loss, the militia garrison flying precipitately before the American advance. The marines behaved with great spirit on this occasion, as they have ever done. Instead of promptly moving down upon the other fort, however, they contented themselves during that day with their bloodless achievement, and not until the next morning did they advance to complete the capture of the place.

The inhabitants of the island were in a state of panic, and when the marines and sailors marched up to attack Fort Nassau they found it empty of any garrison except Governor Brown, who opened the gates and formally surrendered it to the Americans. During the confusion of the night Brown seems to have preserved

his presence of mind, and rightly divining that the powder would be the most precious of all the munitions of warfare in his charge, he had caused a schooner which lay in the harbor to be loaded with one hundred and fifty barrels, the limit of its capacity, and before daybreak she set sail and made good her escape through the unguarded western passage. A dreadful misfortune that, which would not have occurred had Jones been in command.



Map of attack on New Providence in the Bahamas.

However, a large quantity of munitions of war of great value to the struggling colonies fell into the hands of Hopkins' men, including eighty-eight cannon, ranging in size from 9- to 36-pounders, fifteen large mortars, over eleven thousand round shot,

and twenty precious casks of powder. The Americans behaved with great credit in this conquest. None of the inhabitants of the island were harmed, nor was their property touched. It was a noble commentary on some of the British forays along our own coast. Hopkins impressed a sloop, promising to pay for its use and return it when he was through with it, which promise was faithfully kept, and the sloop was loaded with the stores, etc., which had been captured.

His own ships were also heavily laden with these military stores, the Alfred in particular being so overweighted that it was almost impossible to fight her main-deck guns, so near were they to the waterline, except in the most favorable circumstances of wind and weather.

Taking Governor Brown, who was afterward exchanged for General Lord Stirling, and one or two other officials of importance as hostages on board his fleet, Hopkins set sail for home on the 17th of March. He had done his work expeditiously and well, but through want of precaution which had been suggested by Jones, he had failed in part when his success might have been complete. Still, he was bringing supplies of great value, and his handsome achievement was an auspicious beginning of naval operations. The squadron pursued its way toward the United Colonies without any adventures or happenings worthy of chronicle until the 4th of April, when off the east end of Long Island they captured the schooner Hawk, carrying six small guns. On the 5th of April the bomb vessel Bolton, eight guns, forty-

eight men, filled with stores of arms and powder, was captured without loss.

On the 6th, shortly after midnight, the night being dark, the wind gentle, the sea smooth, and the ships very much scattered, swashing along close-hauled on the starboard tack between Block Island and the Rhode Island coast, they made out a large ship, under easy sail, coming down the wind toward the squadron. It was the British sloop of war Glasgow, twenty guns and one hundred and fifty men, commanded by Captain Tyringham Howe. She was accompanied by a small tender, subsequently captured. The nearest ships of the American squadron luffed up to have a closer look at the stranger, the men being sent to quarters in preparation for any emergency. By half after two in the morning the brig Cabot had come within a short distance of her. The stranger now hauled her wind, and Captain John Burroughs Hopkins, the son of the commodore, immediately hailed her. Upon ascertaining who and what she was he promptly poured in a broadside from his small guns, which was at once returned by the formidable battery of the Glasgow. The unequal conflict was kept up with great spirit for a few moments, but the Cabot alone was no match for the heavy English corvette, and after a loss of four killed and several wounded, including the captain severely, the Cabot, greatly damaged in hull and rigging, fell away, and her place was taken by the Alfred, still an unequal match for the English vessel, but more nearly approaching her size and capacity.

The Andrea Doria now got within range and joined in the battle. For some three hours in the night the ships sailed side by side, hotly engaged. After a time the Columbus, Captain Whipple, which had been farthest to leeward, succeeded in crossing the stern of the Glasgow, and raked her as she was passing. The aim of the Americans was poor, and instead of smashing her stern in and doing the damage which might have been anticipated, the shot flew high and, beyond cutting the Englishman up aloft, did no appreciable damage. The Providence, which was very badly handled, managed to get in long range on the lee quarter of the Glasgow and opened an occasional and ineffective fire upon her. But the bulk of the fighting on the part of the Americans was done by the Alfred.

Captain Howe maneuvered and fought his vessel with the greatest skill. During the course of the action a lucky shot from the Glasgow carried away the wheel ropes of the Alfred, and before the relieving tackles could be manned and the damage repaired the American frigate broached to and was severely raked several times before she could be got under command. At daybreak Captain Howe, who had fought a most gallant fight against overwhelming odds, perceived the hopelessness of continuing the combat, and, having easily obtained a commanding lead on the pursuing Americans, put his helm up and ran away before the wind for Newport.

Hopkins followed him for a short distance, keeping up a fire from his bow-chasers, but his deep-laden merchant vessels were

no match in speed for the swift-sailing English sloop of war, and, as with every moment his little squadron with its precious cargo was drawing nearer the English ships stationed at Newport, some of which had already heard the firing and were preparing to get under way, Hopkins hauled his wind, tacked and beat up for New London, where he arrived on the 8th of April with his entire squadron and the prizes they had taken, with the exception of the Hawk, recaptured.

The loss on the Glasgow was one man killed and three wounded; on the American squadron, ten killed and fourteen wounded, the loss being confined mainly to the Alfred and the Cabot, the Columbus having but one man wounded. During this action Paul Jones was stationed in command of the main battery of the Alfred. He had nothing whatever to do with the maneuvers of the ships, and was in no way responsible for the escape of the Glasgow and the failure of the American force to capture her.

The action did not reflect credit on the American arms. The Glasgow, being a regular cruiser and of much heavier armament than any of the American ships, was more than a match for any of them singly, though taken together, if the personnel of the American squadron had been equal to, or if it even approximated, that of the British ship, the latter would have been captured without difficulty. The gun practice of the Americans was very poor, which is not surprising. With the exception of a very few of the officers, none of the Americans had ever been in action, and they knew little about the fine art of hitting a

mark, especially at night. They had had no exercise in target practice and but little in concerted fleet evolution. There seems to have been no lack of courage except in the case of the captain of the Providence, who was court-martialed for incapacity and cowardice, and dismissed from the service. Hopkins' judgment in withdrawing from the pursuit for the reasons stated can not be questioned, neither can he be justly charged with the radical deficiency of the squadron, though he was made to suffer for it.

While the Glasgow escaped, she did not get off scot free. She was badly cut up in the hull, had ten shot through her mainmast, fifty-two through her mizzen staysail, one hundred and ten through her mainsail, and eighty-eight through her foresail. Her royal yards were carried away, many of her spars badly wounded, and her rigging cut to pieces. This catalogue tells the story. The Americans in their excitement and inexperience had fired high, and their shot had gone over their mark. The British defense had been a most gallant one, and the first attack between the ships of the two navies had been a decided triumph for the English.

Paul Jones' conduct in the main battery of the Alfred had been entirely satisfactory to his superior officers. He, with the other officers of that ship, was commended, and subsequent events showed that he still held the confidence of the commodore.

CHAPTER III
THE CRUISE OF THE PROVIDENCE

The British fleet having left Newport in the interim, on the 24th of April, 1776, the American squadron got under way from New London for Providence, Rhode Island. The ships were in bad condition; sickness had broken out among their crews, and no less than two hundred and two men out of a total of perhaps eight hundred and fifty-at best an insufficient complement-were left ill at New London. Their places were in a measure supplied by one hundred and seventy soldiers, lent to the squadron by General Washington, who had happened to pass through New London, *en route* to New York, on the day after Hopkins' arrival. There was a pleasant interview between the two commanders, and it was then that Jones caught his first glimpse of the great leader.

The voyage to New London was made without incident, except that the unfortunate Alfred grounded off Fisher's Island, and had to lighten ship before she could be floated. This delayed her passage so that she did not arrive at Newport until the 28th of April. The health of the squadron was not appreciably bettered by the change, for over one hundred additional men fell ill. Many of the seamen had been enlisted for the cruise only, and they now received their discharge, so that the crews of the already

undermanned ships were so depleted from these causes that it would be impossible for them to put to sea. Washington, who was hard pressed for men, and had troubles of his own, demanded the immediate return to New York of the soldiers he had lent to the fleet. The captain of the Providence being under orders for a court-martial for his conduct, on the 10th of May Hopkins appointed John Paul Jones to the command of the Providence.

The appointment is an evidence of the esteem in which Jones was held by his commanding officer, and is a testimony to the confidence which was felt in his ability and skill; for he alone, out of all the officers in the squadron, was chosen for important sea service at this time. Having no blank commissions by him, Hopkins made out the new commission on the back of Jones' original commission as first lieutenant. It is a matter of interest to note that he was the first officer promoted to command rank from a lieutenancy in the American navy. His first orders directed him to take Washington's borrowed men to New York. After spending a brief time in hurriedly overhauling the brig and preparing her for the voyage, Jones set sail for New York, which he reached on the 18th of May, after thirty-six hours. Having returned the men, Jones remained at New York in accordance with his orders until he could enlist a crew, which he presently succeeded in doing. Thereafter, under supplemental orders, he ran over to New London, took on board such of the men left there who were sufficiently recovered to be able to resume their duties, and came back and reported with them to the commander-in-

chief at Providence. He had performed his duties, routine though they were, expeditiously and properly.

He now received instructions thoroughly to overhaul and fit the Providence for active cruising. She was hove down, had her bottom scraped, and was entirely refitted and provisioned under Jones's skillful and practical direction. Her crew was exercised constantly at small arms and great guns, and every effort made to put her in first-class condition. In spite of the limited means at hand, she became a model little war vessel. On June 10th a sloop of war belonging to the enemy appeared off the bay, and in obedience to a signal from the commodore Jones made sail to engage. Before he caught sight of the vessel she sought safety in flight. On the 13th of June the Providence was ordered to Newburyport, Massachusetts, to convoy a number of merchant vessels loaded with coal for Philadelphia. Before entering upon this important duty, however, Jones was directed to accompany the tender Fly, loaded with cannon, toward New York, and, after seeing her safely into the Sound, convoy some merchant vessels from Stonington to Newport.

There were a number of the enemy's war vessels cruising in these frequented waters, and the carrying out of Jones' simple orders was by no means an easy task; but by address and skill, and that careful watchfulness which even then formed a part of his character, he succeeded in executing all his duties without losing a single vessel under his charge. He had one or two exciting encounters with English war ships, the details

of which are unfortunately not preserved. In one instance, by boldly interposing the Providence between the British frigate Cerberus and a colonial brigantine loaded with military stores from Hispaniola, he diverted the attention of the frigate to his own vessel, and drew her away from the pursuit of the helpless merchantman, which thereby effected her escape. Then the Providence, a swift little brig admirably handled, easily succeeded in shaking off her pursuer, although she had allowed the frigate to come within gunshot range. The brigantine whose escape Jones had thus assured was purchased into the naval service and renamed the Hampden.

The coal fleet had assembled at Boston instead of Newburyport, and in pursuance of his original orders Jones brought them safely to the capes of the Delaware on the 1st of August. The run to Philadelphia was soon made, and Hopkins' appointment, under which he was acting, was ratified by the Congress, and the commission of captain was given him, dated the 8th of August, 1776.

Hitherto Jones, like all the others engaged in the war, had been a subject of England, a colonist in rebellion against the crown. By the Declaration of Independence he had become a citizen of the United States engaged in maintaining the independence and securing the liberty of his adopted country. The change was most agreeable to him. It added a dignity and value to his commission which could not fail to be acceptable to a man of his temperament. It was pleasant to him also to have the

confidence of his commander-in-chief, which had been shown in the appointment to the command of the Providence, justified by the government in the commission which had been issued to him.

Jones had made choice of his course of action in the struggle between kingdom and colony deliberately, not carried away by any enthusiasm of the moment, but moved by the most generous sentiments of liberty and independence. He had much at stake, and he was embarked in that particular profession fraught with peculiar dangers not incident to the life of a soldier. It must have been, therefore, with the greatest satisfaction that he perceived opportunities opening before him in that cause to which he had devoted himself, and in that service of which he was a master. A foreigner with but scant acquaintance and little influence in America, he had to make his way by sheer merit. The value of what has been subsequently called "a political pull" with the Congress was as well known then as it is now, and nearly as much used, too. He practically had none. Nevertheless, his foot was already upon that ladder upon which he intended to mount to the highest round eventually. He was not destined to realize his ambition, however, without a heartbreaking struggle against uncalled-for restraint, and a continued protest against active injustice which tried his very soul.

It was first proposed by the Marine Committee that he return to New England and assume command of the Hampden, but he wisely preferred to remain in the Providence for the time being. He thoroughly knew the ship and the crew, over which he

had gained that ascendency he always enjoyed with those who sailed under his command. Not so much by mistaken kindness or indulgence did he win the devotion of his men-for he was ever a stern and severe, though by no means a merciless, disciplinarian-but because of his undoubted courage, brilliant seamanship, splendid audacity, and uniform success. There is an attraction about these qualities which is exercised perhaps more powerfully upon seamen than upon any other class. The profession of a sailor is one in which immediate decision, address, resource, and courage are more in evidence than in any other. The seaman in an emergency has but little time for reflection, and in the hour of peril, when the demand is made upon him, he must choose the right course instantly-as it were by instinct.

With large discretion in his orders, which were practically to cruise at pleasure and destroy the enemy's commerce, the Providence left the Delaware on the 21st of August. In the first week of the cruise she captured the brigs Sea Nymph, Favorite, and Britannia; the first two laden with rum, sugar, etc., and the last a whaler. These rich prizes were all manned and sent in.

On the morning of the 1st of September, being in the latitude of the Bermudas, five vessels were sighted to leeward. The sea was moderately smooth, with a fresh breeze blowing at the time, and the Providence immediately ran off toward the strangers to investigate. It appeared to the observers on Jones' brig that the largest was an East Indiaman and the others ordinary merchant vessels. They were in error, however, in their conclusions, for

a nearer approach disclosed the fact that the supposed East Indiaman was a frigate of twenty-eight guns, called the Solebay. Jones immediately hauled his wind and clapped on sail. The frigate, which had endeavored to conceal her force with the hope of enticing the Providence under her guns, at once made sail in pursuit. The Providence was a smart goer, and so was the Solebay. The two vessels settled down for a long chase. On the wind it became painfully evident that the frigate had the heels of the brig. With burning anxiety Jones and his officers saw the latter gradually closing with them. Shot from her bow-chasers, as she came within range, rushed through the air at the little American sloop of war, which now hoisted her colors and returned the fire. Seeing this, the Solebay set an American ensign, and fired one or two guns to leeward in token of amity, but Jones was not to be taken in by any transparent ruse of this character. He held on, grimly determined. As the Solebay drew nearer she ceased firing, confident in her ability to capture the chase, for which, indeed, there appeared no escape.

An ordinary seaman, even though a brave man, would probably have given up the game in his mind, though his devotion to duty would have compelled him to continue the fight until actually overhauled, but Jones had no idea of being captured then. Already a plan of escape had developed in his fertile brain. Communicating his intentions to his officers, he completed his preparations, and only awaited the favorable moment for action. The Solebay had crept up to within one hundred yards of the lee

quarter of the Providence. If the frigate yawed and delivered a broadside the brig would be sunk or crippled and captured. Now was the time, if ever, to put his plan in operation. If the maneuver failed, it would be all up with the Americans. As usual, Jones boldly staked all on the issue of the moment. As a preliminary the helm had been put slightly a-weather, and the brig allowed to fall off to leeward a little, so bringing the Solebay almost dead astern-if anything, a little to windward. In anticipation of close action, as Jones had imagined, the English captain had loaded his guns with grape shot, which, of course, would only be effective at short range. Should the Englishman get the Providence under his broadside, a well-aimed discharge of grape would clear her decks and enable him to capture the handsome brig without appreciably damaging her.

From his knowledge of the qualities of the Providence, Jones felt sure that going free-that is, with the wind aft, or on the quarter-he could run away from his pursuer. The men, of course, had been sent to their stations long since. The six 4-pounders, which constituted the lee battery, were quietly manned, the guns being double-shotted with grape and solid shot. The studding sails-light sails calculated to give a great increase in the spread of canvas to augment the speed of the ship in a light breeze, which could be used to advantage going free and in moderate winds-were brought out and prepared for immediate use. Everything having been made ready, and the men cautioned to pay strict attention to orders, and to execute them with the greatest

promptitude and celerity, Jones suddenly put his helm hard up.

The handy Providence spun around on her heel like a top, and in a trice was standing boldly across the forefoot of the onrushing English frigate. When she lay squarely athwart the bows of the Solebay Jones gave the order to fire, and the little battery of 4-pounders barked out its gallant salute and poured its solid shot and grape into the eyes of the frigate. In the confusion of the moment, owing to the suddenness of the unexpected maneuver, and the raking he had received, the English captain lost his head. Before he could realize what had happened, the Providence, partially concealed by the smoke from her own guns, had drawn past him, and, covered with great wide-reaching clouds of light canvas by the nimble fingers of her anxious crew, was ripping through the water at a great rate at a right angle to her former direction.

When the Solebay, rapidly forging ahead, crossed the stern of the saucy American a few moments after, she delivered a broadside, which at that range, as the guns were loaded with grape shot, did little damage to the brig and harmed no one. The distance was too great and the guns were badly aimed. By the time the Solebay had emulated the maneuvers of the Providence and had run off, the latter had gained so great a lead that her escape was practically effected. The English frigate proved to be unable to outfoot the American brig on this course, and after firing upward of a hundred shot at her the Solebay gave over the pursuit. This escape has ever been counted one of the most daring

and subtle pieces of seamanship and skill among the many with which the records of the American navy abound. As subsequent events proved, the failure to capture Jones was most unfortunate on the part of the English.

Jones now shaped his course for the Banks of Newfoundland, to break up the fishing industry and let the British know that ravaging the coast, which they had begun, was a game at which two could play. On the 16th and 17th of the month he ran into a heavy gale, so severe in character that he was forced to strike his guns into the hold on account of the rolling of the brig. The gale abated on the 19th, and on the 20th of September, the day being pleasant, the Providence was hove to and the men were preparing to enjoy a day of rest and amusement, fishing for cod, when in the morning two sail appeared to windward. As Jones was preparing to beat up and investigate them, they saved him that trouble by changing their course and running down toward him. They proved to be a merchant ship and a British frigate, the Milford, 32.

Jones kept the Providence under easy canvas until he learned the force of the enemy, and then made all sail to escape. Finding that he was very much faster than his pursuer, he amused himself during one whole day by ranging ahead and then checking his speed until the frigate would get almost within range, when he would run off again and repeat the performance. It was naturally most tantalizing to the officers of the Milford, and they vented their wrath in futile broadsides whenever there appeared the least

possibility of reaching the Providence. After causing the enemy to expend a large quantity of powder and shot, having tired of the game, Jones contemptuously discharged a musket at them and sailed away.

On the 21st of September he appeared off the island of Canso, one of the principal fishing depots of the Grand Banks. He sent his boat in that night to gain information, and on the 22d he anchored in the harbor. There were three fishing schooners there, one of which he burned, one he scuttled, and the third, called the Ebenezer, he loaded with the fish taken from the two he had destroyed, and manned as a prize. After replenishing his wood and water, on the 23d he sailed up to Isle Madame, having learned that the fishing fleet was lying there dismantled for the winter. Beating to and fro with the Providence off the island, on that same evening he sent an expedition of twenty-five men in a shallop which he had captured at Canso, accompanied by a fully manned boat from the Providence. Both crews were heavily armed. The expedition captured the fishing fleet of nine vessels without loss. The crews of most of them, numbering some three hundred men, were ashore at the time, and the vessels were dismantled. Jones promised that if the men ashore would help to refit the vessels he desired to take with him as prizes, he would leave them a sufficient number of boats to enable them to regain their homes. By his ready address he actually persuaded them to comply with his request, and the unfortunate Englishmen labored assiduously to get the ships ready for sea.

On the 25th of September their preparations were completed, but a violent autumn gale blew up, and their situation became one of great peril. The Providence, anchored in Great St. Peter Channel, rode it out with two anchors down to a long scope of cable. The ship Alexander and the schooner Sea Flower, which were heavily laden with valuable plunder, had also reached the same channel. The Alexander succeeded in making an anchorage under a point of rocks which sheltered her, and enabled her to sustain the shock of the gale unharmed. The Sea Flower was driven on the lee shore, and, being hopelessly wrecked, was scuttled and fired the next day. The Ebenezer, loaded with fish from Canso, was also wrecked. The gale had abated about noon, when, after burning the ship Adventure, dismantled and in ballast, and leaving a brig and two small schooners to enable the English seamen to reach home, the Providence, accompanied by the Alexander and the brigs Kingston Packet and Success, got under way for home. On the 27th the Providence, in spite of the fact that she was now very short-handed on account of the several prizes she had manned, chased two armed transports apparently bound in for Quebec, which managed to make good their escape. The little squadron resumed its course, and arrived safely at Rhode Island without further mishap on the 7th of October.

On this remarkable cruise Jones had captured sixteen vessels, eight of which he manned and sent in as prizes, destroying five of the remainder, and generously leaving three for the

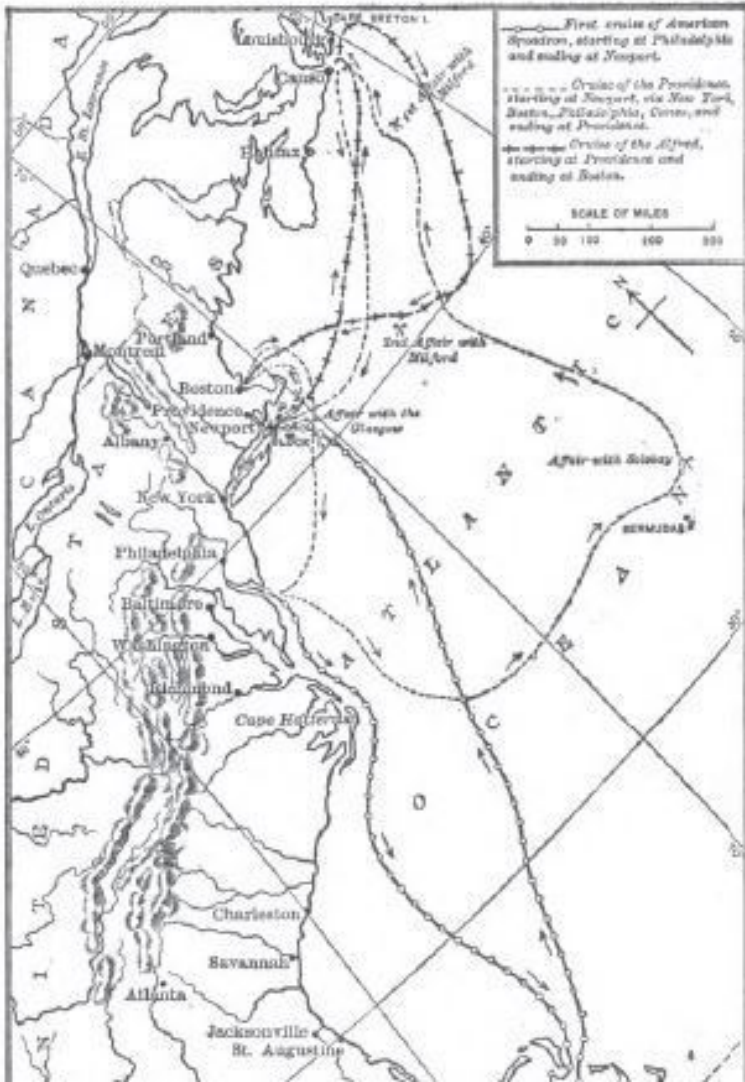
unfortunate fishermen to reach their homes. He had carried out his orders to sink, burn, destroy, and capture with characteristic thoroughness, but without needless cruelty and oppression. He burned no dwelling houses, and turned no non-combatants out of their homes in the middle of winter, as Mowatt had done at Falmouth. He had entirely broken up the fishery at Canso, had escaped by the exercise of the highest seamanship from one British frigate, and had led another a merry dance in impotent pursuit. Property belonging to the enemy had been destroyed to the value of perhaps a million of dollars in round numbers, not to speak of the effect upon their pride by the bold cruising of the little brig of twelve 4-pound guns and seventy men.

CHAPTER IV
THE CRUISE OF THE ALFRED

When his countrymen heard the story of this daring and successful cruise, Jones immediately became the most famous officer of the new navy. The *éclat* he had gained by his brilliant voyage at once raised him from a more or less obscure position, and gave him a great reputation in the eyes of his countrymen, a reputation he did not thereafter lose. But Jones was not a man to live upon a reputation. He had scarcely arrived at Providence before he busied himself with plans for another undertaking. He had learned from prisoners taken on his last cruise that there were a number of American prisoners, at various places, who were undergoing hard labor in the coal mines of Cape Breton Island, and he conceived the bold design of freeing them if possible.

We are here introduced to one striking characteristic, not the least noble among many, of this great man. The appeal of the prisoner always profoundly touched his heart. The freedom of his nature, his own passionate love for liberty and independence, the heritage of his Scotch hills perhaps, ever made him anxious and solicitous about those who languished in captivity. It was but the working out of that spirit which compelled him to relinquish his participation in the lucrative slave trade. In all his public actions, he kept before him as one of his principal objects the release of

such of his countrymen as were undergoing the horrors of British prisons.


First cruise of American Squadron, starting at Philadelphia and ending at Newport.
Cruise of the Providence, starting at Newport, via New York, Boston, Philadelphia, Cowes, and ending at Providence.
Cruise of the Alfred, starting at Providence and ending at Boston.
SCALE OF MILES
0 50 100 200 300
CAPE BRETON I.
Louisbourg
Cansoe
Halifax
Quebec
Portland
Montreal
Boston
Providence
Newport
Albany
New York
Philadelphia
Baltimore
Washington
Richmond
Cape Hatteras
Charleston
Savannah
Atlanta
Jacksonville
St. Augustine
Bermudas
1st Affair with Milford
Affair with the Glasgow
Affair with Solebay
NOVA SCOTIA
CANADA
NEW ENGLAND
MIDDLE STATES
SOUTH CAROLINA
GEORGIA
FLORIDA
ATLANTIC OCEAN

The suggested enterprise found favor in the mind of Commodore Hopkins, who forthwith assigned Jones to the command of a squadron comprising the Alfred, the Providence, and the brigantine Hampden. Jones hoisted his flag on board the Alfred and hastened his preparations for departure. He found the greatest difficulty in manning his little squadron, and finally, in despair of getting a sufficient crew to man them all, he determined to set sail with the Alfred and the Hampden only, the latter vessel being commanded by Captain Hoysted Hacker. He received his orders on the 22d of October, and on the 27th the two vessels got under way from Providence. The wind was blowing fresh at the time, and Hacker, who seems to have been an indifferent sailor, ran the Hampden on a ledge of rock, where she was so badly wrecked as to be unseaworthy. Jones put back to his anchorage, and, having transferred the crew of the Hampden to the Providence, set sail on the 2d of November.

Both vessels were very short-handed. The Alfred, whose proper complement was about three hundred, which had sailed from Philadelphia with two hundred and thirty-five, now could muster no more than one hundred and fifty all told. The two vessels were short of water, provisions, munitions, and everything else that goes to make up a ship of war. Jones made up for all this deficiency by his own personality.

On the evening of the first day out the two vessels anchored in Tarpauling Cove, near Nantucket. There they found a Rhode

Island privateer at anchor. In accordance with the orders of the commodore, Jones searched her for deserters, and from her took four men on board the Alfred. He was afterward sued in the sum of ten thousand pounds for this action, but, though the commodore, as he stated, abandoned him in his defense, nothing came of the suit.

On the 3d of November, by skillful and successful maneuvering, the two ships passed through the heavy British fleet off Block Island, and squared away for the old cruising ground on the Grand Banks. In addition to the release of the prisoners there was another object in the cruise. A squadron of merchant vessels loaded with coal for the British army in New York was about to leave Louisburg under convoy. Jones determined to intercept them if possible.

On the 13th, off Cape Canso again, the Alfred encountered the British armed transport Mellish, of ten guns, having on board one hundred and fifty soldiers. After a trifling resistance she was captured. She was loaded with arms, munitions of war, military supplies, and ten thousand suits of winter clothing, destined for Sir Guy Carleton's army in Canada. She was the most valuable prize which had yet fallen into the hands of the Americans. The warm clothing, especially, would be a godsend to the ragged, naked army of Washington. Of so much importance was this prize that Jones determined not to lose sight of her, and to convoy her into the harbor himself. Putting a prize crew on board, he gave instructions that she was to be scuttled if there appeared any

danger of her recapture.

About this time two other vessels were captured, one of which was a large fishing vessel, from which he was able to replenish his meager store of provisions. On the 14th of November a severe gale blew up from the northwest, accompanied by a violent snowstorm. Captain Hacker bore away to the southward before the storm and parted company during the night, returning incontinently to Newport. The weather continued execrable. Amid blinding snowstorms and fierce winter gales the Alfred and her prizes beat up along the desolate iron-bound shore. Jones again entered the harbor of Canso, and, finding a large English transport laden with provisions for the army aground on a shoal near the mouth of the harbor, sent a boat party which set her on fire. Seeing an immense warehouse filled with oil and material for whale and cod fisheries, the boats made a sudden dash for the shore, and, applying a torch to the building, it was soon consumed.

Beating off the shore, still accompanied by his prizes, he continued up the coast of Cape Breton toward Louisburg, looking for the coal fleet. It was his good fortune to run across it in a dense fog. It consisted of a number of vessels under the convoy of the frigate Flora, a ship which would have made short work of him if she could have run across him. Favored by the impenetrable fog, with great address and hardihood Jones succeeded in capturing no less than three of the convoy, and escaped unnoticed with his prizes.

Two days afterward he came across a heavily armed British privateer from Liverpool, which he took after a slight resistance. But now, when he attempted to make Louisburg to carry out his design of levying on the place and releasing the prisoners, he found that the harbor was closed by masses of ice, and that it was impossible to effect a landing. Indeed, his ships were in a perilous condition already. He had manned no less than six prizes, which had reduced his short crew almost to a prohibitive degree. On board the Alfred he had over one hundred and fifty prisoners, a number greatly in excess of his own men; his water casks were nearly empty, and his provisions were exhausted. He had six prizes with him, one of exceptional value. Nothing could be gained by lingering on the coast, and he decided, therefore, to return.

The little squadron, under convoy of the Alfred and the armed privateer, which he had manned and placed under the command of Lieutenant Saunders, made its way toward the south in the fierce winter weather. Off St. George's Bank they again encountered the Milford. It was late in the afternoon when her topsails rose above the horizon. The wind was blowing fresh from the northwest; the Alfred and her prizes were on the starboard tack, the enemy was to windward. From his previous experience Jones was able fairly to estimate the speed of the Milford. A careful examination convinced him that it would be impossible for the latter to close with his ships before nightfall. He therefore placed the Alfred and the privateer between the English frigate

lasking down upon them and the rest of his ships, and continued his course. He then signaled the prizes, with the exception of the privateer, that they should disregard any orders or signals which he might give in the night, and hold on as they were.

The prizes were slow sailers, and, as the slowest necessarily set the pace for the whole squadron, the Milford gradually overhauled them. At the close of the short winter day, when the night fell and the darkness rendered sight of the pursued impossible, Jones showed a set of lantern signals, and, hanging a top light on the Alfred, right where it would be seen by the Englishmen, at midnight, followed by the privateer, he changed his course directly away from the prizes. The Milford promptly altered her course and pursued the light. The prizes, in obedience to their orders, held on as they were. At daybreak the prizes were nowhere to be seen, and the Milford was booming along after the privateer and the Alfred.

To run was no part of Paul Jones' desires, and he determined to make a closer inspection of the Milford, with a view to engaging if a possibility of capturing her presented itself; so he bore up and headed for the oncoming British frigate. The privateer did the same. A nearer view, however, developed the strength of the enemy, and convinced him that it would be madness to attempt to engage with the Alfred and the privateer in the condition he then was, so he hauled aboard his port tacks once more, and, signaling to the privateer, stood off again. For some reason-Jones imagined that it was caused by a mistaken idea of the strength

of the Milford-Saunders signaled to Jones that the Milford was of inferior force, and disregarding his orders foolishly ran down under her lee from a position of perfect safety, and was captured without a blow. The lack of proper subordination in the nascent navy of the United States brought about many disasters, and this was one of them. Jones characterized this as an act of folly; it is difficult to dismiss it thus mildly. I would fain do no man an injustice, but if a man wanted to be a traitor that is the way he would act. Jones' own account of this adventure, which follows, is of deep interest:

"This led the Milford entirely out of the way of the prizes, and particularly the clothing ship, Mellish, for they were all out of sight in the morning. I had now to get out of the difficulty in the best way I could. In the morning we again tacked, and as the Milford did not make much appearance I was unwilling to quit her without a certainty of her superior force. She was out of shot, on the lee quarter, and as I could only see her bow, I ordered the letter of marque, Lieutenant Saunders, that held a much better wind than the Alfred, to drop slowly astern, until he could discover by a view of the enemy's side whether she was of superior or inferior force, and to make a signal accordingly. On seeing Mr. Saunders drop astern, the Milford wore suddenly and crowded sail toward the northeast. This raised in me such doubts as determined me to wear also, and give chase. Mr. Saunders steered by the wind, while the Milford went lasking, and the Alfred followed her with a pressed sail, so that Mr.

Saunders was soon almost hull down to windward. At last the Milford tacked again, but I did not tack the Alfred till I had the enemy's side fairly open, and could plainly see her force. I then tacked about ten o'clock. The Alfred being too light to be steered by the wind, I bore away two points, while the Milford steered close by the wind, to gain the Alfred's wake; and by that means he dropped astern, notwithstanding his superior sailing. The weather, too, which became exceedingly squally, enabled me to outdo the Milford by carrying more sail. I began to be under no apprehension from the enemy's superiority, for there was every appearance of a severe gale, which really took place in the night. To my great surprise, however, Mr. Saunders, toward four o'clock, bore down on the Milford, made the signal of her inferior force, ran under her lee, and was taken!"

With the exception of one small vessel, which was recaptured, the prizes all arrived safely, the precious Mellish finally reaching the harbor of Dartmouth. The Alfred dropped anchor at Boston, December 15, 1776. The news of the captured clothing reached Washington and gladdened his heart-and the hearts of his troops as well-on the eve of the battle of Trenton.

The reward for this brilliant and successful cruise, the splendid results of which had been brought about by the most meager means, was an order relieving him of the command of the Alfred and assigning him to the Providence again. When he arrived at Philadelphia the next spring he found that by an act of Congress, on the 10th of October, 1776, which had created a number

of captains in the navy, he, who had been first on the list of lieutenants, and therefore the sixth ranking sea officer, was now made the eighteenth captain. He was passed over by men who had no claim whatever to superiority on the score of their service to the Commonwealth, which had been inconsiderable or nothing at all. Indeed, there was no man in the country who by merit or achievement was entitled to precede him, except possibly Nicholas Biddle.

If the friendless Scotsman had commanded more influence, more political prestige, so that he might have been rewarded for his auspicious services by placing him at the head of the navy, I venture to believe that some glorious chapters in our marine history would have been written.

CHAPTER V
SUPERSEDED IN RANK-PROTESTS VAINLY AGAINST THE INJUSTICE-ORDERED TO COMMAND THE RANGER-HOISTS FIRST AMERICAN FLAG

The period between the termination of his last cruise and his assignment to his next important command was employed by Jones in vigorous and proper protests against the arbitrary action of Congress, which had deprived him of that position on the navy list which was his just due, were either merit, date of commission, or quality of service considered. To the ordinary citizen the question may appear of little interest, but to the professional soldier or sailor it is of the first importance. Indeed, it is impossible to conceive of properly maintaining an army or navy without regular promotion, definitive station, and adequate reward of merit. To feel that rank is temporary and position is at the will of unreasonable and irresponsible direction is to undermine service.

The same injustice drove John Stark, of New Hampshire, to resign the service with the pithy observation that an officer

who could not protect his own rights was unfit to be trusted with those of his country. It did not prevent his winning the fight at Bennington, though. The same treatment caused Daniel Morgan to seek that retirement from which he was only drawn forth by his country's peril to win the Battle of the Cowpens. And, lastly, it was the same treatment which, in part at least, made Arnold a traitor. Then, as ever, Congress was continually meddling with matters of purely military administration, to the very great detriment of the service.

Jones has been censured as a jealous stickler for rank, a quibbler about petty distinctions in trying times. Such criticisms proceed from ignorance. If there were nothing else, rank means opportunity. The range of prospective enterprises is greater the higher the rank. The little Scotsman was properly tenacious of his prerogatives-we could not admire him if he were not so-and naturally exasperated by the arbitrary course of Congress, against which he protested with all the vehemence of his passionate, fiery, and-it must be confessed-somewhat irritable nature. On this subject he thus wrote to the Marine Board at Philadelphia:

"I am now to inform you that by a letter from Commodore Hopkins, dated on board the Warren, January 14, 1777, which came to my hands a day or two ago, I am superseded in the command of the Alfred, in favour of Captain Hinman, and ordered back to the sloop in Providence River. Whether this order doth or doth not supersede also your orders to me of the 10th ult. you can best determine; however, as I undertook the

late expedition at his (Commodore Hopkins') request, from a principle of humanity, I mean not now to make a difficulty about trifles, especially when the good of the service is to be consulted. As I am unconscious of any neglect of duty or misconduct, since my appointment at the first as eldest lieutenant of the navy, I can not suppose that you have intended to set me aside in favour of any man who did not at that time bear a captain's commission, unless, indeed, that man, by exerting his superior abilities, hath rendered or can render more important services to America. Those who stepped forth at the first, in ships altogether unfit for war, were generally considered as frantic rather than wise men, for it must be remembered that almost everything then made against them. And although the success in the affair with the Glasgow was not equal to what it might have been, yet the blame ought not to be general. The principal or principals in command alone are culpable, and the other officers, while they stand unimpeached, have their full merit. There were, it is true, divers persons, from misrepresentation, put into commission at the beginning, without fit qualification, and perhaps the number may have been increased by later appointments; but it follows not that the gentleman or man of merit should be neglected or overlooked on their account. None other than a gentleman, as well as a seaman both in theory and practice, is qualified to support the character of a commission officer in the navy; nor is any man fit to command a ship of war who is not also capable of communicating his ideas on paper, in language that becomes

his rank. If this be admitted, the foregoing operations will be sufficiently clear; but if further proof is required it can easily be produced.

"When I entered into the service I was not actuated by motives of self-interest. I stepped forth as a free citizen of the world, in defense of the violated rights of mankind, and not in search of riches, whereof, I thank God, I inherit a sufficiency; but I should prove my degeneracy were I not in the highest degree tenacious of my rank and seniority. As a gentleman I can yield this point up only to persons of superior abilities and superior merit, and under such persons it would be my highest ambition to learn. As this is the first time of my having expressed the least anxiety on my own account, I must entreat your patience until I account to you for the reason which hath given me this freedom of sentiment. It seems that Captain Hinman's commission is No. 1, and that, in consequence, he who was at first my junior officer by eight, *hath expressed himself as my senior officer* in a manner which doth himself no honour, and which doth me signal injury. There are also in the navy persons who have not shown me fair play after the service I have rendered them. I have even been blamed for the civilities which I have shown to my prisoners, at the request of one of whom I herein inclose an appeal, which I must beg leave to lay before Congress. Could you see the appellant's accomplished lady, and the innocents their children, arguments in their behalf would be unnecessary. As the base-minded only are capable of inconsistencies, you will not blame my free soul, which can never

stoop where I can not also esteem. Could I, which I never can, bear to be superseded, I should indeed deserve your contempt and total neglect. I am therefore to entreat you to employ me in the most enterprising and active service, accountable to your honourable board only for my conduct, and connected as much as possible with gentlemen and men of good sense."

The letter does credit to his head and heart alike. Matter and manner are both admirable. In it he is at his best, and one paragraph shows that the generous sympathy he ever felt for a prisoner could even be extended to the enemies of his country, so that as far as he personally was concerned they should suffer no needless hardship in captivity. Considered as the production of a man whose life from boyhood had been mainly spent upon the sea in trading ships and slavers, with their limited opportunities for polite learning, and an entire absence of that refined society without which education rarely rises to the point of culture, the form and substance of Jones' letters are surprising. Of this and of most of the letters hereafter to be quoted only words of approbation may be used. A just yet modest appreciation of his own dignity, a proper and resolute determination to maintain it, a total failure to truckle to great men, an absence of sycophancy and hypocrisy, a clear insight into the requirements of a gentleman and an effortless rising to his own high standard without unpleasant self-assertion, are found in his correspondence. Considering the humble source from which he sprang, his words, written and spoken, equally with his deeds,

indicate his rare qualities.

It is probable that no disposition existed in Congress to do him an injustice-quite the reverse, in fact; but the claims of the representatives of the several States, which were insistently put forth in behalf of local individuals aspiring to naval station from the various colonies in which the different ships were building, were too strong to be disregarded. The central administration was at no time sufficiently firm for a really strong government, and conciliation and temporization were necessary. It was only by the very highest quality of tact that greater difficulties were overcome, and that more glaring acts of injustice were not perpetrated. So sensible were the authorities of Jones' conduct, so valuable had been his services on his last two cruises, that while they were unable at that time, in spite of his protests, to restore him to his proper place in the list, as a concession to his ability and merit orders were given him assigning him to the command of the squadron consisting of the Alfred, Columbus, Cabot, Hampden, and Providence, to operate against Pensacola.

This was virtually creating him commander-in-chief of the naval forces, for outside the ships mentioned there were but few others worthy of consideration. Natural jealousy had, however, arisen in the mind of Hopkins, the commander-in-chief, at being thus superseded and ignored through one of his own subordinates by Congress, with which his relations had become so strained that he affected to disbelieve the validity of the order assigning Jones to this duty, and, refusing to comply therewith, retained

the ships under his command. The matter thereupon fell through.

Finding all efforts to secure the squadron and carry out these orders fruitless, Jones journeyed to Philadelphia for the purpose of emphatically placing before the Marine Committee his grievances. There a further shock awaited him.

"My conduct hitherto," he writes on this subject in the memorial addressed to Congress from the Texel years after, "was so much approved of by Congress that on the 5th of February, 1777, I was appointed, with unlimited orders, to command a little squadron of the Alfred, Columbus, Cabot, Hampden, and sloop Providence. Various important services were pointed out, but I was left at free liberty to make my election. That service, however, did not take place; for the commodore, who had three of the squadron blocked in at Providence, affected to disbelieve my appointment, and would not at last give me the necessary assistance. Finding that he trifled with my applications as well as the orders of Congress, I undertook a journey from Boston to Philadelphia, in order to explain matters to Congress in person. I took this step also because Captain Hinman had succeeded me in the command of the Alfred, and, of course, the service could not suffer through my absence. I arrived at Philadelphia in the beginning of April. But what was my surprise to find that, by a new line of navy rank, which had taken place on the 10th day of October, 1776, all the officers that had stepped forth at the beginning were superseded! I was myself superseded by thirteen men, not one of whom did (and perhaps some of them

durst not) take the sea against the British flag at the first; for several of them who were then applied to refused to venture, and none of them has since been very happy in proving their superior abilities. Among these thirteen there are individuals who can neither pretend to parts nor education, and with whom, as a private gentleman, I would disdain to associate.

"I leave your excellency and the Congress to judge how this must affect a man of honour and sensibility.

"I was told by President Hancock that what gave me so much pain had been the effect of a multiplicity of business. He acknowledged the injustice of that regulation, said it should make but a nominal and temporary difference, and that in the meantime I might assure myself that no navy officer stood higher in the opinion of Congress than myself."

The complete news of his displacement and supersession in rank does not appear to have reached him before this. His efforts to secure the restoration of his rank proving useless, he applied for immediate sea duty. The next attempt on the part of the Marine Committee to gratify Jones's wish for active service, and avail themselves of his ability at the same time, took the shape of a resolution of Congress authorizing him to choose the best of three ships which it was proposed to purchase in Boston, which he was to command until some better provision could be made for him. He was ordered to that point to fit out the ship. During this period of harassing anxiety he gave great attention to formulating plans and making suggestions looking to a more

effective organization of the new naval establishment.

To Robert Morris, chairman of the committee, on different occasions, he communicated his views on this important subject in a series of valuable letters, of which the following are pertinent extracts:

"As the regulations of the navy are of the utmost consequence, you will not think me presumptuous, if, with the utmost diffidence, I venture to communicate to you such hints as, in my judgment, will promote its honor and good government. I could heartily wish that every commissioned officer were to be previously examined; for, to my certain knowledge, there are persons who have already crept into commission without abilities or fit qualifications; I am myself far from desiring to be excused. From experience in ours, as well as from my former intimacy with many officers of note in the British navy, I am convinced that the parity of rank between sea and land or marine officers is of more consequence to the harmony of the sea service than has generally been imagined… I propose not our enemies as an example for our general imitation; yet, as their navy is the best regulated of any in the world, we must, in some degree, imitate them, and aim at such further improvement as may one day make ours vie with and exceed theirs."

With regard to the difficulty of recruiting seamen, some of whom, finding the merchant service or coasting trade was broken up, had entered the army at the beginning of the war, while many more had engaged in privateering-a much more profitable

vocation than the regular service-he says:

"It is to the least degree distressing to contemplate the state and establishment of our navy. The common class of mankind are actuated by no nobler principle than that of self-interest; this, and this alone, determines all adventurers in privateers-the owners, as well as those whom they employ. And while this is the case, unless the private emolument of individuals in our navy is made superior to that in privateers, it can never become respectable, it will never become formidable. And without a respectable navy-alas! America. In the present critical situation of affairs human wisdom can suggest no more than one infallible expedient: enlist the seamen during pleasure, and give them all the prizes. What is the paltry emolument of two thirds of prizes to the finances of this vast continent? If so poor a resource is essential to its independence, in sober sadness we are involved in a woeful predicament, and our ruin is fast approaching. The situation of America is new in the annals of mankind; her affairs cry haste, and speed must answer them. Trifles, therefore, ought to be wholly disregarded, as being, in the old vulgar proverb, penny wise and pound foolish. If our enemies, with the best establishment and most formidable navy in the universe, have found it expedient to assign all prizes to the captors, how much more is such policy essential to our infant fleet! But I need use no arguments to convince you of the necessity of making the emoluments of our navy equal, if not superior, to theirs. We have had proof that a navy may be officered on almost

any terms, but we are not so sure that these officers are equal to their commissions; nor will the Congress ever obtain such certainty until they in their wisdom see proper to appoint a board of admiralty competent to determine impartially the respective merits and abilities of their officers, and to superintend, regulate, and point out all the motions and operations of the navy."

In another letter to Robert Morris he writes:

"There are no officers more immediately wanted in the marine department than commissioners of dockyards, to superintend the building and outfits of all ships of war; with power to appoint deputies, to provide, and have in constant readiness, sufficient quantities of provisions, stores, and slops, so that the small number of ships we have may be constantly employed, and not continue idle, as they do at present. Besides all the advantages that would arise from such appointments, the saving which would accrue to the continent is worth attending to. Had such men been appointed at the first, the new ships might have been at sea long ago. The difficulty now lies in finding men who are deserving, and who are fitly qualified for an office of such importance."

We are surprised at the clear insight of this untrained, inexperienced Scotsman, whom, by the way, I shall hereafter call an American. Most of his recommendations have long since been adopted in our own navy and other navies of the world. His conclusions are the results of his long and thorough professional study, his habits of application, his power of comprehension and faculty of clear and explicit statement. His observations would

do credit to the most trained observer with large experience back of his observation.

Another curious letter to a former friend on the island of Tobago, written at this time, which deals with certain investments in property with balances due him from his various trading ventures, contains the following statement:

"As I hope my dear mother is still alive, I must inform you that I wish my property in Tobago, or in England, after paying my just debts, to be applied for her support. Your own feelings, my dear sir, make it unnecessary for me to use arguments to prevail with you on this tender point. Any remittances which you may be enabled to make, through the hands of my good friend Captain John Plainer, of Cork, will be faithfully put into her hands; she hath several orphan grandchildren to provide for."

All of which plainly indicates that, though a citizen of another country and the bearer of another name, he still retained those natural feelings of affection which his enemies would fain persuade us were not in his being.

While waiting at Boston for the purchase of the ships referred to, he was selected by Congress to command a heavy ship of war, a frigate to be called the Indien, then building at Amsterdam, which undoubtedly would be the most formidable vessel in the American service. This would be not only a just tribute to his merit, but would also solve the difficulty about relative rank, for he would be the highest ranking officer in Continental waters, and there could be no conflict of authority. He was directed to

proceed at once to Europe to take command of this ship. The Marine Committee sent the following letter, addressed to the commissioners of the United States in Europe, to Paul Jones, for him to present to them on his arrival in France:

"Philadelphia, May 9, 1777.

"Honourable Gentlemen: This letter is intended to be delivered to you by John Paul Jones, Esquire, an active and brave commander in our navy, who has already performed signal services in vessels of little force; and, in reward for his zeal, we have directed him to go on board the Amphitrite, a French ship of twenty guns, that brought in a valuable cargo of stores from Messrs. Hortalez & Co.,[4] and with her to repair to France. He takes with him his commission, and some officers and men, so that we hope he will, under that sanction, make some good prizes with the Amphitrite; but our design of sending him is, with the approbation of Congress, that you may purchase one of those fine frigates that Mr. Deane writes us you can get, and invest him with the command thereof as soon as possible. We hope you may not delay this business one moment, but purchase, in such port or place in Europe as it can be done with most convenience and dispatch, a fine, fast-sailing frigate, or larger ship. Direct Captain Jones where he must repair to, and he will take with him his officers and men toward manning her. You will assign him some good house or agent, to supply him with everything necessary to

[4] A fictitious house, under the name of which the commissioners sent out military stores.

get the ship speedily and well equipped and manned; somebody that will bestir himself vigorously in the business, and never quit it until it is accomplished.

"If you have any plan or service to be performed in Europe by such a ship, that you think will be more for the interest and honour of the States than sending her out directly, Captain Jones is instructed to obey your orders; and, to save repetition, let him lay before you the instructions we have given him, and furnish you with a copy thereof. You can then judge what will be necessary for you to direct him in; and whatever you do will be approved, as it will undoubtedly tend to promote the public service of this country.

"You see by this step how much dependence Congress places in your advices; and you must make it a point not to disappoint Captain Jones' wishes and expectations on this occasion."

At the same time the committee sent the following letter to Jones himself:

"Philadelphia, May 9, 1777.

"Sir: Congress have thought proper to authorize the Secret Committee to employ you on a voyage in the Amphitrite, from Portsmouth to Carolina and France, where it is expected you will be provided with a fine frigate; and as your present commission is for the command of a particular ship, we now send you a new one, whereby you are appointed a captain in our navy, and of course may command any ship in the service to which you are particularly ordered. You are to obey the orders of the Secret

Committee, and we are, sir, etc."

The Amphitrite, which was to carry out Jones and the other officers and seamen to man the proposed frigate, was an armed merchantman. The French commander of the Amphitrite, however, made great difficulty with regard to surrendering his command to Jones, and even to receiving him and his men on board the ship, and through his persistent and vehement objections this promising arrangement likewise fell through. Jones continued his importunities for a command, however, his desire being then, as always, for active service. Finally, by the following resolutions passed by Congress on the 14th of June, he was appointed to the sloop of war Ranger, then nearing completion at Portsmouth, New Hampshire:

"*Resolved*, That the flag of the thirteen United States be thirteen stripes, alternate red and white; that the union be thirteen stars, white in a blue field, representing a new constellation.

"*Resolved*, That Captain Paul Jones be appointed to command the ship Ranger.

"*Resolved*, That William Whipple, Esquire, member of Congress and of the Marine Committee, John Langdon, Esquire, Continental agent, and the said John Paul Jones be authorized to appoint lieutenants and other commissioned and warrant officers necessary for the said ship; and that blank commissions and warrants be sent them, to be filled up with the names of the persons they appoint, returns whereof to be made to the navy board in the Eastern Department."

At last, having received something tangible, he hastened to Portsmouth as soon as his orders were delivered to him, and assumed the command. It is claimed, perhaps with justice, that his hand was the first to hoist the new flag of the Republic, the Stars and Stripes, to the masthead of a war ship, as it had been the first to hoist the first flag of any sort at the masthead of the Alfred, not quite two years before. The date of this striking event is not known.

It is interesting to note the conjunction of Jones with the flag in this resolution; an association justified by his past, and to be further justified by his future, conduct, and by the curious relationship in which he was brought to the colors of the United States by his opportune action upon various occasions. The name of no other man is so associated with our flag as is his.

CHAPTER VI
THE FIRST CRUISE OF THE RANGER-SALUTE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

In spite of the most assiduous effort on the part of Jones, he was unable to get the Ranger ready for sea before October, and the following extract from another letter to the Marine Committee shows the difficulties under which he labored, and the inadequate equipment and outfit with which he finally sailed.

"With all my industry I could not get the single suit of sails completed until the 20th current. Since that time the winds and weather have laid me under the necessity of continuing in port. At this time it blows a very heavy gale from the northeast. The ship with difficulty rides it out, with yards and topmasts struck, and whole cables ahead. When it clears up I expect the wind from the northwest, and shall not fail to embrace it, although I have not a spare sail nor materials to make one. Some of those I have are made of hissings.[5] I never before had so disagreeable service to perform as that which I have now accomplished, and of which another will claim the credit as well as the profit. However, in doing my utmost, I am sensible that I have done no more than

[5] A coarse thin stuff, a very poor substitute for the ordinary canvas.

my duty."

The instructions under which Jones sailed for Europe are outlined in the following orders from the Marine Committee:

"As soon as these instructions get to hand you are to make immediate application to the proper persons to get your vessel victualed and fitted for sea with all expedition. When this is done you are to proceed on a voyage to some convenient port in France; on your arrival there, apply to the agent, if any, in or near said port, for such supplies as you may stand in need of. You are at the same time to give immediate notice, by letter, to the Honourable Benjamin Franklin, Silas Deane, and Arthur Lee, Esquires, or any of them at Paris, of your arrival, requesting their instructions as to your further destination, which instructions you are to obey as far as it shall be in your power.

"You are to take particular notice that while on the coast of France, or in a French port, you are, as much as you conveniently can, to keep your guns covered and concealed, and to make as little warlike appearance as possible."

In the original plan the ship was heavily over-armed, being pierced for twenty-six guns. Considering her size and slight construction, Jones exercised his usual good judgment by refusing to take more than eighteen guns, the ordinary complement for a ship of her class. These were 6-pounders manufactured in the United States and ill proportioned, being several calibres short in the length of the barrel, according to a statement of the captain-a most serious defect. To all

these disabilities was added an inefficient and insubordinate first lieutenant named Simpson, who probably had been appointed to this responsible position on account of the considerable family influence which was back of him. He was related to the Hancocks among others. The crew was a fair one, but was spoiled eventually by the example of Simpson and other officers. On the first of November, 1777, the imperfectly provided Ranger took her departure from Portsmouth bound for Europe. Her captain laments the fact that she had but thirty gallons of rum aboard for the men to drink, a serious defect in those grog-serving days. Before sailing, Jones made large advances from his private funds to the men, the Government being already in his debt to the amount of fifteen hundred pounds, for previous advances to the men of the Alfred and the Providence. None of these advances were repaid until years after. These facts are evidence, by the way, that he had finally realized considerable sums of money from his brother's estate, for he had no other financial resource save his West Indian investments, which were worth nothing to him at this time.

Wickes, Johnston, and Cunningham, in the Reprisal, Lexington, Surprise, and Revenge, insignificant vessels of inferior force, had by their brilliant and successful cruising in the English Channel demonstrated the possibility of operations against British commerce in that supposedly safe quarter of the ocean. Paul Jones was now to undertake, upon a larger scale, similar operations with much more astounding results.

On the way over, two prizes, both brigantines, laden with wine and fruit, were captured. Nearing the other side, the Ranger fell in with ten sail of merchantmen from the Mediterranean, under convoy of the line of battle ship Invincible, 74. Jones made strenuous efforts to cut out one of the convoy, but they clung so closely to the line of battle ship that he found it impossible to bring about his design, though he remained in sight of the convoy during one whole day. Had the Ranger been swifter or handier, he might have effected something, but she was very crank and slow as well.

On the 2d of December the sloop of war dropped anchor in the harbor of Nantes. Jones sent his letters and instructions to the commissioners, and had the pleasure of confirming to them the news of the surrender of Burgoyne and his army, which was probably the most important factor in bringing about the subsequent alliance between America and France. While awaiting a reply to his letters he busied himself in repairing the defects and weaknesses of his ship so far as his limited means permitted. Her trim was altered, ballast restowed, and a large quantity of lead taken on board; the lower masts were shortened several feet, and every other change which his skill and experience dictated was made on the ship. The results greatly conduced to her efficiency. It may be stated here that Jones was a thorough and accomplished seaman, and no man was capable of getting more out of a ship than he. From a slow, crank, unwieldy vessel he developed the sloop of war into a handy, amenable ship,

and very much increased her speed.

In January, 1778, in obedience to instructions from the commissioners, he visited them in Paris and explained to them in detail his proposed plan of action. Alone among the naval commanders of his day does he appear to have appreciated that commerce destroying can be best carried on and the enemy most injured by concentrated attacks by mobile and efficient force upon large bodies of shipping in harbors and home ports, rather than by sporadic cruising in more or less frequented seas. He had come across with the hope of taking command of the fine frigate Indien, then building in Holland, and then, with the Ranger and such other ships as might be procured, carrying out his ideas by a series of bold descents upon the English coasts. But while the ministers of the King of France were hesitating, or perhaps better perfecting their plans preparatory to announcing an alliance offensive and defensive with this country, it was deemed of the utmost importance that no occasion should be given the British which would enable them unduly to hasten the course of events. The suspicion of the British Government was aroused with respect to the Indien, however, and it was thought best, under the circumstances, to pretend that she was being made for the Government of France, with which England was then nominally at peace. In any event, work upon her had been so delayed that she was very far from completion, and would not have been available for months.

Thus was Jones deprived of the enjoyment of this command,

to his great personal regret, to the disarrangement of his plans, and to the detriment of the cause he was so gallantly to support. There was no other ship nor were any smaller vessels then available for him, and he was therefore of necessity continued in the command of the Ranger.

This in itself was annoying, and produced a sequence of events of a most unfortunate character. Lieutenant Simpson had been promised the command of the Ranger when Jones took over the Indien, and the failure to keep this promise entailed by the circumstances mentioned, embittered Simpson to such a degree that his efficiency-never of the first order-was greatly impaired, and so long as he remained under the command of Jones he was a smoldering brand of discontent and disobedience.

On the 10th of January Jones, who had rejoined his ship, wrote at great length to Silas Deane, one of the commissioners, suggesting a plan whereby, in case the proposed alliance between France and the rebellious colonies were consummated, a magnificent blow might be struck against England, and the cause of the Revolution thereby greatly furthered. He urged that Admiral D'Estaing should be dispatched with a great fleet to pen up and capture Lord Howe, then operating in the Delaware with an inferior fleet. There is no doubt that this conception was essentially sound, and if he himself could have been intrusted with the carrying out of the plan the results would have been most happy; but, in order to effect anything, in peace or war, prompt action is as necessary as careful planning and wise decision.

When the French did finally adopt the plan they found that their dilatory proceedings, their failure to take immediate advantage of past preparation, and their substitution of Toulon for Brest as a naval point of departure, doomed the enterprise to failure. Lord Howe, hearing of the attempt, and realizing his precarious and indefensive position in the Delaware, made haste to return to his old anchorage in New York. When D'Estaing, urged by Washington, arrived off the harbor, he was deterred from attacking Lord Howe's inferior force by the representations of the pilots, who stated that there was not enough water on the bar for the greater ships of the line. While, therefore, Jones' suggestion came to nothing, it is interesting and instructive to contemplate this project of his fertile brain. Another enterprise proposed by him involved an expedition to take the island of St. Helena, and with it as a base of attack attempt the capture of the numerous Indiamen which either stopped at Jamestown or passed near the island. This too was unheeded.

While these matters were under consideration, the Ranger sailed from Nantes to Quiberon Bay early in February, 1778, having under convoy several American trading ships which were desirous of joining a great fleet of merchant vessels assembling at that point. These vessels were to be convoyed past Cape Finisterre on their way across the Atlantic by a heavy French squadron of five line of battle ships and several frigates and sloops under the command of La Motte Piquet.

On the 13th of February the Ranger hove to off the bay. The

wind was blowing furiously, as it frequently does on the rocky confines of that bold shore, off which a few years before the great Lord Hawke had signally defeated Conflans; but, instead of running to an anchorage immediately, Jones sent a boat ashore, and through the American resident agent communicated to the French commander his intention of entering the bay the next day and saluting him; asking, as was customary, that the salute be returned. The French admiral courteously replied that he would return four guns less than the number he received, his instructions being to that effect, and in accordance with the custom of his navy when an interchange of sea courtesies took place between the fleets of France and those of a republic. This was not satisfactory to the doughty American, and he addressed the following letter to the American agent for the French commander:

"February 14, 1778.

"Dear Sir: I am extremely sorry to give you fresh trouble, but I think the admiral's answer of yesterday requires an explanation. The haughty English return gun for gun to foreign officers of equal rank, and two less only to captains by flag officers. It is true, my command at present is not important, yet, as the senior American officer at present in Europe, it is my duty to claim an equal return of respect to the flag of the United States that would be shown to any other flag whatever.

"I therefore take the liberty of inclosing an appointment, perhaps as respectable as any which the French admiral can

produce; besides which, I have others in my possession.

"If, however, he persists in refusing to return an equal salute, I will accept of two guns less, as I have not the rank of admiral.

"It is my opinion that he would return four less to a privateer or a merchant ship; therefore, as I have been honoured oftener than once with a chief command of ships of war, I can not in honour accept of the same terms of respect.

"You will singularly oblige me by waiting upon the admiral; and I ardently hope you will succeed in the application, else I shall be under a necessity of departing without coming into the bay.

"I have the honour to be, etc.

"To William Carmichael, Esq.

"N. B. – Though thirteen guns is your greatest salute in America, yet if the French admiral should prefer a greater number he has his choice *on conditions*."

A great stickler for his rights and for all the prerogatives of his station was John Paul Jones. In this instance he was maintaining the dignity of the United States by insisting upon a proper recognition of his command.

However, having learned afterward that the contention of the French admiral was correct, Jones determined to accept the indicated return, realizing with his usual keenness that the gist of the matter lay in receiving any salute rather than in the number of guns which it comprised; so the Ranger got under way late in the evening of the 14th, and beat in toward the harbor. It was almost dark when she drew abreast the great French flagship.

Backing his main-topsail, the 6-pounders on the main deck of the Ranger barked out their salute of thirteen guns, which was promptly returned by the French commander with nine heavy guns from the battle ship.

It was the first time the Stars and Stripes had been saluted on the high seas. It was, in fact, the first official recognition of the existence of this new power by the authorized military representatives of any civilized nation. A Dutch governor of St. Eustatius, a year before, had saluted an American ensign-not the Stars and Stripes, of course-on one of our cruisers, but the act had been disavowed and the governor promptly recalled for his presumption.

As this little transaction between Paul Jones and La Motte Piquet had occurred so late at night, the American sent word to the Frenchman that he proposed to sail through his line in broad daylight on the morrow, with the brig Independence, a privateer temporarily attached to his command, and salute him in the open light of day. With great good humor and complaisance, La Motte Piquet again expressed his intention of responding. Accordingly, the next morning, Jones repaired on board the Independence, which had been lying to during the night outside of signal distance, and, having made everything as smart and as shipshape as possible on the little vessel, with the newest and brightest of American ensigns flying from every masthead, the little brig sailed past the towering walls of the great ships of the line, saluting and receiving their reply. There were no doubts in

any one's mind as to the reality of the salute to the flag after that!

It must have been a proud moment for the man who had hoisted the pine-tree flag for the first time on the Alfred; for the man who had been the first officer of the American navy to receive promotion; for the man who had first flung the Stars and Stripes to the breeze from the masthead of a ship; for the man who, in his little vessel, trifling and inconsiderable as she was, was yet about to maintain the honor of that flag with unexampled heroism in the home waters and in the presence of the proudest, most splendid, and most efficient navy of the world. That 15th of February, that bright, cold, clear winter morning, is one of the memorable anniversaries in the history of our nation.

Writing to the Marine Committee on the 22d of February, 1778, he says:

"I am happy in having it in my power to congratulate you on my having seen the American flag for the first time recognized in the fullest and completest manner by the flag of France. I was off their bay the 13th instant, and sent my boat in the next day, to know if the admiral would return my salute. He answered that he would return to me, as the senior American Continental officer in Europe, the same salute which he was authorized by his court to return to an admiral of Holland, or any other republic, which was four guns less than the salute given. I hesitated at this, for I demanded gun for gun. Therefore I anchored in the entrance of the bay, at a distance from the French fleet; but, after a very particular inquiry on the 14th, finding that he had really told the

truth, I was induced to accept of his offer, the more so as it was, in fact, an acknowledgment of American independence. The wind being contrary and blowing hard, it was after sunset before the Ranger got near enough to salute La Motte Piquet with thirteen guns, which he returned with nine. However, to put the matter beyond a doubt, I did not suffer the Independence to salute till next morning, when I sent the admiral word that I would sail through his fleet in the brig, and would salute him in open day. He was exceedingly pleased, and he returned the compliment also with nine guns."

The much-talked-of treaty of alliance between France and the United States had been secretly signed six days before, but neither of the participants of this interchange of sea courtesies was then aware of this fact. Having discharged his duties by placing the merchant ships he had convoyed under La Motte Piquet's command, Jones left Quiberon Bay and went to Brest, where there was assembled a great French fleet under the famous Comte D'Orvilliers. Jones had the pleasure of again receiving, by the courtesy of that gallant officer, a reply to the Ranger's salute from the great guns of the flagship La Bretagne.

The Frenchman, whose acquaintance Jones promptly made, was much attracted by his daring and ingenuous personality, and, having been advised of the disappointment caused by the loss of the Indien, he offered to procure him a commission as a captain in the French navy and assign him to a heavy frigate instead of the petty sloop of war at present under his command-

an unprecedented honor. Had Jones been the mere soldier of fortune which his enemies have endeavored to maintain he was, this brilliant offer would have met with a ready acceptance. The French marine, through the strenuous efforts of the king and his ministers, was then in a most flourishing condition. The terrific defeats at the close of the century and the beginning of the next were still in the womb of events and had not been brought forth, and the prospects of its success were exceedingly brilliant. With the backing of D'Orvilliers and his own capacity, speedy promotion and advancement might easily be predicted for the American. He refused decisively to accept the flattering offer, and remained with the Ranger.

On the 10th of April, having done what he could to put the ship in efficient trim, he sailed from Brest under the following orders:

"Paris, January 16, 1778.

"Sir: As it is not in our power to procure you such a ship as you expected, we advise you, after equipping the Ranger in the best manner for the cruise you propose, that you proceed with her in the manner you shall judge best for distressing the enemies of the United States, by sea or otherwise, consistent with the laws of war and the terms of your commission." (Directions here follow for sending prizes taken on the coasts of France and Spain into Bilboa or Corogne, unless the danger was too great, in which case they were to be sent to L'Orient or Bordeaux.) "If you make an attempt on the coast of Great Britain we advise you not to

return immediately into the ports of France, unless forced by stress of weather or the pursuit of the enemy; and in such case you can make the proper representation to the officers of the port, and acquaint us with your situation. We rely on your ability, as well as your zeal, to serve the United States, and therefore do not give you particular instructions as to your operations. We must caution you against giving any cause of complaint to the subjects of France or Spain, or of other neutral powers, and recommend it to you to show them every proper mark of respect and real civility which may be in your power."

These orders had been dated and issued to him some months before, but were not modified or revoked in the interim. He was given an opportunity to carry out so much of his proposed plan for attacking the English coast as was possible with his single ship.

CHAPTER VII
THE SECOND CRUISE OF THE RANGER-THE DESCENT ON WHITEHAVEN-THE ATTEMPT ON LORD SELKIRK-THE CAPTURE OF THE DRAKE

The first few days of the cruise were uneventful. On the 14th of April, 1778, between the Scilly Isles and Cape Clear, the Ranger captured a brig bound for Ireland loaded with flaxseed. As the prize and her cargo were not worth sending in, the vessel was burned at sea. On the 17th, off St. George's Channel, they overhauled a large ship, the Lord Chatham, loaded with porter *en route* from London to Dublin. The ship and cargo being of great value-one likes to think how the porter must have appealed to the seamen, who, it is quite likely, were permitted to regale themselves to a limited extent from the cargo-she was manned and sent back to Brest as a prize. After this capture Jones proceeded up the Irish Channel, heading to the northeast, and on the 18th, finding himself off the northern extremity of the Isle of Man, and in line with Whitehaven, he attempted to carry out a preconceived project of destroying the shipping in the port;

being determined, as he says, by one great burning of ships to put an end to the burnings and ravagings and maraudings of the British upon the undefended coasts of North America.

The wind was blowing from the east, and he beat up against it toward the town, where he hoped to find a large number of ships in the harbor. The adverse wind delayed him, however, and it was not until ten o'clock at night that the Ranger reached a point from which it was practicable to dispatch the boats. Preparations were hastily made, and the boats were called away and manned by volunteers. The boats were already in the water when the wind suddenly shifted and blew hard on shore, so that the Ranger was forced to beat out to sea promptly to avoid taking ground on the shoals under her lee. The expedition, therefore, for that time, was abandoned, the boats were swung up to the davits, and the Ranger filled away again.

The next morning, off the Mull of Galloway, they captured a schooner loaded with barley and sunk her. Learning from some prisoners that ten or twelve large ships, under the protection of a small tender, were anchored in Lochvyau, Scotland, Jones ran for that harbor, intending to destroy them, but the variable weather, as before, interfered with his plans, and a sudden squall drove the Ranger into the open once more and saved the ships. He captured and sunk a small Irish fishing sloop, making prisoners of the fishermen, that same afternoon. The sloop was of no value to Jones, and he would have let her go had it not been that he feared the alarm would be given. He treated the fishermen

kindly, however, and, as we shall see, in the end they suffered no loss from his action.

On the 20th he captured a sloop loaded with grain, and on the 21st, off Carrickfergus, he took another small fishing boat. Learning from the fishermen that the British man-of-war Drake, twenty guns and a hundred and fifty men, was lying at anchor in Belfast Lough, he promptly determined upon a bold scheme to effect her capture. Beating to and fro off the mouth of the Lough until the evening, as soon as it was dark he ran for the harbor, proposing to lay his vessel athwart the hawse of the Drake, lying unsuspiciously at anchor, drop his own anchor over the cable of the English sloop of war, and capture her by boarding.

Every preparation was made to carry out this brilliant *coup de main*. The crew were mustered at quarters, armed for boarding with pike or cutlass and pistol, the best shots were told off to sweep the decks of the Drake with small-arm fire, guns were loaded and primed, and so on. It was blowing heavily as the Ranger under reduced canvas dashed gallantly into the harbor. With masterly seamanship Jones brought her to in exactly the right position, and gave the order to let go the anchor. His orders were not obeyed, through the negligence of a drunken boatswain, it was said, and the anchor was not dropped until the Ranger had drifted down past the lee quarter of the Drake, when she brought up. The position of the American was now one of extreme peril. The Ranger lay under the broadside of the Drake, subjected to her fire and unable to make reply.

The watch kept on the British ship, however, must have been very careless. In the darkness of the night, too, the guns of the Ranger being run in, it is probable that if they observed her they took her for a clumsy merchantman. Enjoining perfect silence on the part of his crew, with the greatest coolness Jones took the necessary steps to extricate the vessel from her dangerous position. The cable was cut, sail made, and under a heavy press of canvas the Ranger beat out of the harbor, barely clearing the entrance, and only escaping wreck by the consummate ability of her captain.

The plan was brilliantly conceived, and would have been successful but for the mischance, or delay, in dropping the anchor. The crew originally was only a fair one, as has been stated, and, owing to the fact that their wages had not been paid, they were in a more or less mutinous state by this time. Jones was covetous of glory only. A less mercenary man never lived. To fight and conquer was his aim, but in this he radically differed from the ideas of his officers and men. Where he wrote honor and fame they saw plunder and prize money, and it was sometimes difficult to get them to obey orders and properly to work the ship.

After leaving Belfast the Ranger ratched over to the southern coast of Scotland to ride out the sudden and furious gale under the lee of the land. The wind had abated by the morning of the 22d, and the sun rose bright and clear, discovering from the of the Ranger a beautiful prospect of the three kingdoms covered

with snow as far as the eye could see. The wind now set fair for Whitehaven, and Jones squared away for that port to carry out his previous project. The breeze fell during the day, however, and it was not until midnight that the boats were called away.

The expedition comprised two boats, carrying thirty-one officers and men, all volunteers, Jones himself being in command of one boat, while Lieutenant Wallingford, one of the best officers of the ship, had the other. Simpson and the second lieutenant both pleaded indisposition and fatigue as excuse for not going on the expedition. The tide was ebbing, and it was not until nearly dawn, after a long, hard pull, that the two boats reached the harbor, which was divided into two parts at that time by a long stone pier. There were from seventy to one hundred ships on the north side of the pier, and about twice as many on the south side, ranging in size from two hundred to four hundred tons. As the tide was out, the ships were all aground, lying high and dry upon the beach, and in close touch with each other. Directing Wallingford to set fire to the ships on the north side of the pier, Jones and his party landed and advanced toward the fort which protected the harbor.

The weather was raw and cold, the fort was old and dilapidated, and manned by a few men. The sentry, ignorant of the presence of any foe, never dreaming of an enemy within a thousand miles of him, had calmly retired to the sentry box. Probably he was asleep. The little party approached the walls without being detected. Climbing upon the shoulder of one of his

men, Jones sprang over the rampart, where he was followed by the rest of the party. The feeble garrison was captured without striking a blow. The guns were hastily spiked. Ordering the prisoners to be marched down to the wharf, and throwing out a few sentries, Jones, attended by a single midshipman, then made his way to the other fort or battery, a distance of about half a mile. Finding it untenanted, he spiked the few guns mounted there and returned to the landing place.

To his very great surprise and disappointment, no evidence of a conflagration was apparent. When he reached the wharf he was met by Wallingford, who explained his failure to fire the shipping by claiming that his lights had gone out. It was before the days of lucifer matches, and the party had carried candles in lanterns with which to kindle the fires. Wallingford excused himself by a remark which does more credit to his heart than to his head, to the effect that he could not see that anything was to be gained by burning poor people's property. Inasmuch as he was sent on the expedition to obey orders and not to philosophize, his statement gives the key to the disposition among the officers and crew. Whether his hesitation was dictated by charity to others or lack of possible profit to the officers and men it is not necessary to inquire particularly now, for Wallingford redeemed himself nobly later in the cruise. A hasty inspection revealed the fact that the candles had also burned out, or had been extinguished through carelessness, in Jones' own boat.

It was now broad daylight, and considerations of safety

indicated an immediate return to the ship; but Jones was not willing to abandon his brilliantly conceived, carefully prepared, and coolly undertaken enterprise without some measure of success. Re-posting his sentries, therefore, he dispatched messengers who broke into a neighboring dwelling house and procured a light in the shape of a torch or glowing ember. With his own hand Jones kindled a fire on one of the largest ships in the midst of the huddle of vessels on the beach. In order to insure a thorough conflagration, a hasty search through the other vessels was made, and a barrel of tar was found which was poured upon the flames now burning fiercely.

One of the boat party, named David Freeman, happened to be an Englishman. In the confusion attendant upon these various maneuvers he made off, and, escaping observation, sought shelter in the town, which he quickly alarmed. The inhabitants came swarming out of their houses in the gray of the morning and hastened toward the wharf. Seeing that the fire on the ship was at last blazing furiously, and realizing that nothing more could be effected, Jones ordered his men to their boats. Then, in order that the fire already kindled might have sufficient time to develop, the undaunted captain stood alone on the wharf, pistol in hand, confronting the ever-increasing crowd. Impelled by pressure from behind, those in front finally made a movement toward him. He gave no ground whatever. Pointing his weapons at the front rank, he sternly bade them retire, which they did with precipitation. I should think so. Having remained a sufficient

time, as he thought, he calmly entered the boat and was rowed to the Ranger.

Some of the inhabitants promptly made a dash for the burning ship, and succeeded by hard work in confining the fire to that one vessel. Others released the prisoners which Jones left bound on the wharf, taking, as he said, only two or three for a sample. The soldiers ran to the fort and managed to draw the hastily applied spikes from two or three of the guns, which they loaded and fired after the retreating boats. Answering the harmless fusillade with a few derisive musket shots, Jones returned to the Ranger; having had, he says, the pleasure of neither inflicting nor receiving any loss in killed or wounded.

The desertion and treachery of David Freeman undoubtedly saved the shipping. The enterprise was well conceived and carried out with the utmost coolness. Had the orders of Captain Jones been obeyed, the shipping would have been completely destroyed. As it was, the descent created the greatest consternation in England. No enemy had landed on those shores for generations, and the expedition by Jones was like slapping the face of the king on his throne. A burning wave of indignation swept over England, as the news was carried from town to town, from hall to hall, and from hamlet to hamlet. It was all very well to burn property in America, but the matter had a different aspect entirely when the burning took place in England. A universal demand arose for the capture of this audacious seaman, who was called many hard names by the infuriated British.

From Whitehaven the Ranger ran over to St. Mary's Isle, a beautifully wooded promontory at the mouth of the River Dee, which was the seat of the Earl of Selkirk. In furtherance of his usual desire to ameliorate the wretched condition of the Americans in British prisons, Jones determined to seize the earl. He cherished the hope that by securing the person of a peer of the realm, who could be either held as a hostage or exchanged for some prominent American captive, he could thus effect a recognition of the principle of exchange, which the British had refused to consider. It was a wild hope, to be sure, but not without a certain plausibility.

Two boat crews under the command of Lieutenants Simpson and Hall, with himself in charge of the expedition, landed on the shore. Before moving toward the hall, Jones learned that the earl was not at home. He proposed, therefore, to return to the ship, but the mutinous men demurred fiercely to this suggestion, and demanded that they be permitted to enjoy the opportunity for plunder presented. The situation was a precarious one, and Jones finally agreed, although very reluctantly, that they should demand the family silver from the Countess of Selkirk, who was at home. He did this with the full intention of purchasing the silver on his own account when the prizes were disposed of, and returning it to the earl. A party of the men, therefore, with Simpson and Hall, went up to the house, leaving Jones pacing to and fro near the shore under the oaks and chestnuts of the estate. By Jones' orders the seamen did not enter the house. Simpson and Hall

were ushered into the presence of the Lady Selkirk, made their demand upon her ladyship, received the silver, which the butler gathered up for them, and retired without molesting or harming any of the inmates or endeavoring to appropriate anything except what was given them. The men drank her ladyship's health in good Scots whisky, which was served them by the countess' orders. The party then embarked on the Ranger.

One of his biographers has said that the whole transaction was an evidence of the singular ability of Jones in creating difficulties which it afterward required greater labor to overcome; but the criticism is unfair. The only way in which he could satisfy the demands of his men and maintain even that precarious authority which the peculiar constitution of the crew and the character of his officers enabled him to have, was by permitting them to take something of value which could be turned into prize money. He could buy it from the prize court, or from the prize master, as well as any other man, and after it became his own property he could return it to its proper owners at his pleasure.

It was a perfectly legitimate transaction on his part, and he could only obviate the necessity by taking the proposed value of the silver out of his own pocket and handing it to his men, a proceeding which would have been subversive of the last remains of discipline, and therefore could not be considered for a moment. It would establish a precedent which could not be carried out in the future unless he were willing to abrogate his right of command; if he began that way he would have to buy

their acquiescence to every command-bribe them to obey orders; so he said nothing whatever to them about his intentions with regard to the plate at present.

Standing away from St. Mary's Isle on the morning of the 24th, the Ranger came in sight once more of Carrickfergus. By this time her presence on the Irish coast had become well known, and expresses had been sent to the Drake with information of the propinquity of the enemy. In the afternoon the Ranger appeared in the offing easily visible from the Drake. The commander of the Drake, Captain George Burdon, with singular stupidity, sent a lieutenant and a boat off toward the Ranger to investigate and report what she was, meanwhile getting his ship under way and clearing for action. The boat foolishly came alongside the Ranger and was captured. As Burdon weighed anchor he was joined by Lieutenant William Dobbs, engaged on recruiting duty in the vicinity, and a band of volunteers ranging in number, according to different reports, from ten to forty.

The regular complement of the Drake was one hundred and fifty officers and men. This re-enforcement raised her crew to between one hundred and sixty and one hundred and ninety. It was developed at the court-martial, which was held upon the survivors some months after for the loss of the ship, that the Drake was poorly prepared for action; that she was short of commissioned and warrant officers and skilled men; that her powder charges were bad, matches poor, cartridges unfilled, and that her guns were badly mounted, so that they were easily

"overset," and so on. In short, the whole catalogue of usual excuses for failure is given. It is true that although the Drake carried two more guns than the Ranger, they were of smaller caliber, being 4-pounders. Still, the two ships were well matched, and preparedness for action has always been considered a test of naval ability as much as capacity in maneuvering and courage in the actual fight.

The wind was now blowing toward the shore, and the Drake made but slow progress in ratching toward the sea. While the Ranger awaited her, the guns were run in and the English flag hoisted on the approach of the Drake's boat, and the character of the American disguised as much as possible. I presume that, save for her armament, she looked more like a merchant vessel than anything else, and, as Jones skillfully kept the sloop end on to the cutter, the British suspected, or at least discovered, nothing. Indeed, so well was the deception carried out that the Drake's officer actually boarded the Ranger and was made prisoner with his crew before he discovered her quality.

Meanwhile things were almost in a state of mutiny. Jones states in his journal that he was in peril of his life from his recalcitrant crew, who, under the leadership of Simpson, were apparently appalled at the prospect of encountering a regular man-of-war, and therefore manifested a great unwillingness to fight. Plunder without danger was the end of their ambition. However, after the capture of the Drake's boat, by putting a bold front on the situation, Jones succeeded in restoring comparative

order and getting his men to their quarters. His power of persuasive and inspiring speech never stood him in better stead than on this occasion, and he actually seems to have succeeded in infusing some of his own spirit into the refractory men.

It was late in the evening before the Drake neared the Ranger. Jones had stood out to sea to draw his pursuer far away from the land to prevent his escape in case of defeat, and now awaited his advance. The Drake was accompanied by several pleasure yachts filled with people who were desirous of seeing the English victory, which was almost universally attendant upon single ship actions in which the British navy participated; but, not liking the look of things in this instance, they one by one dropped astern and returned to the land.

Between five and six o'clock, having come within easy distance, an officer of the Drake sprang on the rail and hailed, demanding to know the name of the stranger. Jones, still keeping the stern of his ship toward the bow of the enemy, seized the trumpet and replied:

"This is the American Continental ship Ranger. We are waiting for you. The sun is scarce an hour high. It is time to begin. Come on!"

While he was amusing the English captain with this rather lengthy rejoinder for the purpose of gaining time, the Stars and Stripes supplanted the red ensign of England, the helm of the Ranger, which was to windward of her antagonist, was suddenly put up, and by smart handling, in the twinkling of an eye she

was rushed across the bow of the Drake, which was severely raked by a prompt broadside at short range. As Jones shifted his helm so as not to lose the weather gauge, the advantage of the first hard blow was clearly with the Americans. The English captain, after an attempt to cross her stern, which was frustrated by Jones' promptness, ran off by the side of the Ranger, and the combat resolved itself into a fair and square yardarm to yardarm fight, which was continued with the most determined persistence on both sides. The two ships under the gentle breeze sailed side by side, gradually nearing, and poured a furious fire upon each other. The lack of preparedness on the English ship was manifested in the slowness and inaccuracy of her gun practice. That of the Ranger, however, was very effective. An hour and five minutes after the first broadside the enemy called for quarter and hauled down the flag. The Drake was a wreck. Her fore and main topsail yards were cut adrift and lying on the caps; the fore topgallant yard and the spanker gaff were hanging up and down their respective masts; two ensigns had been shot away, and another one was hanging over the quarter galley and dragging in the water. The jib was dragging under her forefoot; her sails and rigging were entirely cut to pieces, most of the yards wounded, and her hull very much shattered. Many of her guns were dismounted, and she had lost, according to the statement of the Americans, forty-two[6] men in killed and wounded (or about twenty per cent of her force!), including her captain, who

[6] English accounts state their casualties at twenty-five.

had been struck in the head by a musket ball at the close of the action, about a minute before the ship surrendered; the gallant first lieutenant, Dobbs, who had bravely volunteered for service, was so severely wounded that he survived the action only two days. Captain Burdon was still living when Jones boarded the prize, but died a few moments after. The Americans lost two killed, among them being poor Wallingford, whose death has somewhat redeemed him from his failure to obey orders in the raid on Whitehaven. There were six wounded on the Ranger, including the gunner and a midshipman who lost his arm; one of the wounded subsequently died.

The action was a sharp and brilliant one. Jones had maneuvered and fought his ship with his usual skill and courage, and had given fair evidence of what might be expected from him with a better vessel and better men under his command. The English captain had been outmaneuvered when he permitted the American to rake him, and he had been outfought in the action. Unpreparedness was the cause of the failure of the Drake to make a better showing in the fight. This lack must be laid at the captain's door. It is the business of a captain to see that things are ready. The deficiencies in the Drake's equipment were counterbalanced by equal deficiencies on the part of the Ranger. The apparent preponderance of the latter's gun power was, in fact, minimized by the shortening of her guns, of which Jones had previously complained. It is probable that the Drake had a better crew, and such officers as she had were probably better

than those under Jones, with a few exceptions. It is always the custom of the defeated party to make excuses, and always will be; but the ships were as nearly matched in offensive qualities as two vessels in different navies are ever likely to be, and the difference between them, which determined the issue of the conflict, was purely a question of the personal equation. It was always hard to find anything to counterbalance Jones for the other side of the equality sign. Burdon was not the man.

The English captain was a brave but very stupid or very confident man. Jones was more than a match for him at best, and when the mistakes of Burdon are considered the comparison is painful. The English knew that the Ranger was on the coast; the Drake had picked up her anchor (it was, of course, recaptured), and an alert mind would have connected the recovered anchor with the attempt of the night of the 20th. The suspicious actions of the stranger-and there must have been some indication in her maneuvers and appearance at least to inspire caution-the failure of the boat crew either to return or to make any signal, should have made the English captain pause and consider the situation. But with the usual "uncircumspect gallantry" of his kind he charged down, bull-like, on his enemy, was promptly raked, hammered to pieces, killed, and his ship surrendered. He proved his courage in battle-which no one would question, bravery being usual and to be expected-and he died in the attempt to atone for his rashness; but professionally he was a failure, and his demise was fortunate for his reputation and future career.

His death probably prevented some very inconvenient questions being asked him.

Jones treated his prisoners with a kindness and consideration the more remarkable from the fact that the contrary was the custom with the British toward American captives. During the night and the whole of the next day, the weather being moderate, the two ships were hove to while the Drake was refitted as well as their resources permitted. Late the next afternoon a large brigantine, actuated by an unfortunate curiosity, ran down so near the two ships that she was brought to by a shot from the Drake and taken possession of. Having repaired damages and put the Drake in as good trim as possible, Jones first determined to return to Brest by the South Channel, the way he had come, but the variable wind shifted and came strongly, and he decided to run northward before it and pass around the west coast of Ireland. In spite of his previous insubordination Simpson was placed in command of the Drake.

Before they left these waters, however, something still remained to be done. On the evening of the 25th the two ships sailed once more for Belfast Lough. There Jones hove the Ranger to, and, having given the poor Irish fishermen, whom he had captured on the 21st and held, one of the Drake's boats, and having charitably bestowed upon them all the guineas which he had left in his private purse (not many, I suppose) to remunerate them for the loss they had sustained, he sent them ashore. They took with them one of the Drake's sails, which would attest the

truth of their story of what had happened. The grateful Irishmen were delighted and touched by such unusual treatment, and they signalized their gratitude to their generous and kindhearted captor by giving Jones three cheers from the boat as they passed the Ranger's quarter. The Americans then bore away to the northwestward.

The voyage around the coast of Ireland was uneventful. Lieutenant Dobbs, of the Drake, died on the cruise, and he and Captain Burdon were buried at sea with all possible honors, Jones himself reading the usual Church service. The cruise was continued without incident until the morning of the 5th of May, when the Ranger being off Ushant, and having the Drake in tow, Jones cut the towline and bore away in chase of a sail which had been sighted. Simpson, instead of continuing toward Brest, as he had been directed, hauled off to the south, so that when Jones had overtaken the chase and found her a neutral, the Drake was almost entirely out of sight to the southward.

The Ranger chased her and made various signals, to which no attention was paid. Simpson changed his course aimlessly several times. During the whole of the day the same eccentric maneuvers on the part of the Drake continued. To Jones' great annoyance, the inexplicable actions of the prize prevented him from chasing several large vessels which he saw standing into the Channel, among which he would probably have made many valuable captures. He was forced to abandon any attempt to take them and follow the Drake, which he only overhauled late in

the evening. By Jones' orders Lieutenant Elijah Hall immediately replaced Simpson in command of the Drake, and the latter was placed under arrest. On the 8th of May both vessels arrived safely at Brest, from which point Jones promptly dispatched the following remarkable letter to the Countess of Selkirk:

"Ranger, Brest, May 8, 1778.

"*THE RIGHT HON. THE COUNTESS OF SELKIRK.*

"Madam: It can not be too much lamented that, in the profession of arms, the officer of fine feelings and real sensibility should be under the necessity of winking at any action of persons under his command which his heart can not approve; but the reflection is doubly severe when he finds himself obliged, in appearance, to countenance such actions by his authority. This hard case was mine, when, on the 23d of April last, I landed on St. Mary's Isle. Knowing Lord Selkirk's interest with his king, and esteeming as I do his private character, I wished to make him the happy instrument of alleviating the horrors of hopeless captivity, when the brave are overpowered and made prisoners of war. It was perhaps fortunate for you, madam, that he was from home, for it was my intention to have taken him on board the Ranger and detained him until, through, his means, a general and fair exchange of prisoners, as well in Europe as in America, had been effected.

"When I was informed, by some men whom I met at landing that his lordship was absent, I walked back to my boat, determined to leave the island. By the way, however, some

officers who were with me could not forbear expressing their discontent, observing that in America no delicacy was shown by the English, who took away all sorts of movable property, setting fire not only to towns and to the houses of the rich, without distinction, but not even sparing the wretched hamlets and milch cows of the poor and helpless, at the approach of an inclement winter. That party had been with me the same morning at Whitehaven; some complaisance, therefore, was their due. I had but a moment to think how I might gratify them, and at the same time do your ladyship the least injury. I charged the officers to permit none of the seamen to enter the house, or to hurt anything about it; to treat you, madam, with the utmost respect; to accept of the plate which was offered, and to come away without making a search or demanding anything else. I am induced to believe that I was punctually obeyed, since I am informed that the plate which they brought away is far short of the quantity expressed in the inventory which accompanied it. I have gratified my men, and when the plate is sold I shall become the purchaser, and will gratify my own feelings by restoring it to you by such conveyance as you shall please to direct.

"Had the earl been on board the Ranger the following evening he would have seen the awful pomp and dreadful carnage of a sea engagement, both affording ample subject for the pencil, as well as melancholy reflection for the contemplative mind. Humanity starts back from such scenes of horror, and can not sufficiently execrate the vile promoters of this detestable war.

"'For they, 'twas they unsheathed the ruthless blade, And Heaven shall ask the havoc it has made.'

"The British ship of war Drake, mounting twenty guns, with more than her full complement of officers and men, was our opponent. The ships met, and the advantage was disputed with great fortitude on each side for an hour and four minutes, when the gallant commander of the Drake fell, and victory declared in favor of the Ranger. The amiable lieutenant lay mortally wounded, besides near forty of the inferior officers and crew killed and wounded-a melancholy demonstration of the uncertainty of human prospects and of the sad reverses of fortune which an hour can produce. I buried them in a spacious grave, with the honors due to the memory of the brave.

"Though I have drawn my sword in the present generous struggle for the rights of men, yet I am not in arms as an American, nor am I in pursuit of riches. My fortune is liberal enough, having no wife and family, and having lived long enough to know that riches can not secure happiness. I profess myself a citizen of the world, totally unfettered by the little mean distinctions of climates or of country, which diminish the benevolence of the heart and set bounds to philanthropy. Before this war was begun, I had, at an early time in life, withdrawn from sea service in favor of 'calm contemplation and poetic ease.' I have sacrificed not only my favorite scheme of life, but the softer affections of the heart, and my prospects of domestic happiness, and I am ready to sacrifice my life also with cheerfulness, if that

forfeiture could restore peace among mankind.

"As the feelings of your gentle bosom can not but be congenial with mine, let me entreat you, madam, to use your persuasive art with your husband, to endeavour to stop this cruel and destructive war, in which Britain can never succeed. Heaven can never countenance the barbarous and unmanly practice of the Britons in America, which savages would blush at, and which, if not discontinued, will soon be retaliated on Britain by a justly enraged people. Should you fail in this, and I am persuaded you will attempt it (and who can resist the power of such an advocate?), your endeavour to effect a general exchange of prisoners will be an act of humanity, which will afford you golden feelings on your deathbed.

"I hope this cruel contest will soon be closed; but, should it continue, I wage no war with the fair. I acknowledge their force, and bend before it with submission. Let not, therefore, the amiable Countess of Selkirk regard me as an enemy; I am ambitious of her esteem and friendship, and would do anything, consistent with my duty, to merit it. The honor of a line from your hand, in answer to this, will lay me under a singular obligation, and if I can render you any acceptable service in France or elsewhere I hope you see into my character so far as to command me, without the least grain of reserve. I wish to know the exact behaviour of my people, as I am determined to punish them if they have exceeded their liberty.

"I have the honor to be, with much esteem and with profound

respect, madam, etc.,

"John Paul Jones."

The shrewd Franklin says of this extraordinary document: "It is a gallant letter, which must give her ladyship a high and just opinion of your generosity and nobleness of mind." But I seem to read a gentle laugh in the tactful words of the old philosopher. I like this epistle less than any of Jones' letters I have read, but it certainly does not merit the severe censures which have been passed upon it. No one would write such a letter to-day, certainly, but things were different then, and we need not too closely criticise the form and style of the document in view of its honest purpose and good intent.

As might have been expected, the Countess of Selkirk made no reply to this singular communication. To anticipate the course of events, and obviate the necessity of further discussion of this incident, it may be stated that more than a year after its capture Jones obtained possession of the plate through the prize court by strenuous effort, and by paying for it at an exorbitant valuation. The state of warfare then existing between France and England prevented the delivery of the silver for several years, though Jones made earnest efforts to get it into the hands of the Selkirks whenever apparent opportunity presented. It was not, however, until 1784, after peace had been declared, that the plate was restored to its original owners. It is stated that it was received by them in exactly the same condition as when it had been taken, even to the tea leaves which were still in the teapot! The receipt

of the silver is thus acknowledged in a letter from Lord Selkirk:

"London, August 4, 1789.

"*Monsieur le Chevalier Paul Jones, à Paris.*

"Sir: I received the letter you wrote to me at the time you sent off my plate, in order for restoring it. Had I known where to direct a letter to you at the time it arrived in Scotland I would then have wrote to you; but, not knowing it, nor finding that any of my acquaintance at Edinburgh knew it, I was obliged to delay writing till I came here, when, by means of a gentleman connected with America, I was told M. le Grand was your banker at Paris, and would take proper care of a letter for you; therefore, I inclose this to him.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.