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FROM THE NAVAL CHRONICLE.

SYNOPSIS OF NAVAL ACTIONS.

An article, the first part of which the reader will find below, has lately made its appearance in the British Naval Chronicle. It appears to contain all that has hitherto been urged, as well as every thing that can be urged in extenuation of the numerous disasters of England during the last war, on the ocean and the lakes, together with a garbishing of invention, sneering, and sarcasm. We have all heard these excuses before, but there are some admissions made by this "British Naval Officer" in his zeal to account for the almost miraculous disparity of loss in these actions, which cannot be accounted for by the mere disparity of force, which we consider as decisive of the question of superiority. We mean therefore to give the whole of it to our readers in our subsequent numbers, together with some accompanying remarks, in order that a fair judgment may be formed. We have preferred giving the "Synopsis" entire, rather than quote extracts from it, not only because we considered it the fairest way, but for the reason that if on any occasion we deviated into severity of remark, our readers might refer to that article for our justification.

FROM THE BRITISH NAVAL CHRONICLE.

A Synopsis of Naval Actions between the Ships of His Britannic Majesty and of the United States, during the late War. By a British naval officer on the American station.

"Mr. Editor—Permit me to present to you a history of the encounters of British with American public and private armed ships; it was my intention to narrate such losses of national ships only as were, or by the rules of our service should have been preceded by resistance, however slight or unavailing. I have since determined to include all losses of regular men-of-war sustained by either nation through the other's means; also casual meetings of the respective national vessels, in which the stronger force not merely declined engaging, but ran away from an enemy often more daring than discreet. American accounts of these matters are drawn up not more to amuse the citizens, than to acquire a name among the nations of Europe at our expense. In these metaphysical productions truth is never an obstacle. What Englishman can read them without feelings of indignation?—A former volume of yours contains the translation of a letter from the captain of Le Genereux, 74, to the French government, detailing his capture of the Leander 50 gun ship. That, except for its brevity, affords a tolerable specimen of the official correspondence of American naval commanders. The latter have an advantage however in the talents of their numerous commentators for drawing inferences and explaining ambiguities to suit the wishes of the writer and the taste of the public. Much has been said both in public and private about the capture of so many of our national vessels by the Americans. On our side bewailings and excuses—the enemy's exaggerations and boasts have been invariably resorted to; but no where can be seen the statements of the force engaged in the different actions. British accounts of actions are sometimes faulty, but rather for want of minuteness than for studied misrepresentation. Our credit has suffered more by painters and journalists than by the official statements of British officers. A handsome engraving of the action between the Shannon and Chesapeake is turned from with disgust by those acquainted with the real force of the ships. The enemy shows fifteen guns of a side on her main-deck, when she had only fourteen, her broadside being as usual vacant. Should that pass unobserved he that can read is at once informed below, that the Chesapeake mounted forty-nine, the Shannon thirty-eight guns. Either the actual mounting or the rate of both ships should be given, not the mounting of one and the rate of the other. This lays us open to an enemy who, we should recollect, speaks our own language, and can therefore recriminate with double effect. Besides, did the Shannon's action need any embellishment? The period elapsed since most of the battles were fought, has brought to light many particulars respecting the armament of the American ships that were at first (for purposes of exultation no doubt) industriously concealed. Of these I shall take advantage, and any remaining point of difference between British and American statements I shall endeavor to reconcile. One reason for deferring this publication to so late a period is not only to collect all the necessary facts, but to obtain a view of the adverse statement of each action, hoping by that means to present the world with a fair and impartial summary of naval occurrences between us and America during the late war, and which may help to detect and refute some at least of the numerous falsehoods hitherto so undeviating a feature in the maritime records of the latter power. It is now fully ascertained that the American forty-fours are equal in length to our first class seventy-fours, and built with similar scantling, having their sides both above and below at least a fourth thicker than our heaviest frigates. They have 2 entire decks, and carry their lower deck battery equally high and commanding with the new razes. When government resolved to have ships able to meet frigates like these on equal terms, they should have fitted out razes with 24 pounds on the lower deck—reserving at the same time a few ships armed like the *Majestic* and *Saturn* (with long 32's) to cope with the new thirty-two pounder frigates now fitting for sea in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Ships of the former kind, well manned and appointed, would be far more likely to succeed in a long close action with the American forty-four than the "slight built" fifty-fives. The American crews were many years ago fully sensible of the advantages to be derived from having their ships of war of greater force than the rate implied, and the measure was deliberately considered and resolved on by the government. How far the imposition thus solemnly resolved upon, when afterwards carried into effect, benefited the gunning people, is now but too well known. The capture of our packets or of the enemy's revenue-cutters and gun-boats will be excluded from the plan—although upwards of twenty of the latter have been taken or destroyed, and the former, by the unparalleled successes they have made, rank high in the annals of fame. Our first loss to the Americans was the *Whiting* schooner of four guns. She was taken at anchor in American waters, ignorant of the war. The next was the *Alert* of six guns and forty-four men. She ran down upon an iceberg for several minutes the *Essex*, Capt. Porter, of nearly four times her force. Even rashness like this is preferable to a surrender like that of the *Frobick* to the *Orpheus* and *Shellfire*. When the American squadron first proceeded to sea at the commencement of the war, their men were thoroughly drilled at the guns, and the several situations of boatswain, gunner, captain of the guns, &c. on board every ship, were principally filled by British seamen. At this period our half-manned ships, having no enemy to dread, (French ships being seldom out) were carelessly cruising about in every sea. Thus was met by the American ship *Constitution*, on the 17th of August, 1812, the frigate *Guerriere*, returning into port with sprung masts after a long cruise. A long

action ensued and American captain on the force of 1 former I have obtained, and the latter the action. To engaged in the different the broadside shifting gun is on riere had a gun in the bridal on heel, which was could not be used eluded from the tation in guns as statement subsequently within six pounds with that published in captain Daeres' letter to the admiralty. The following then is an estimate of the force engaged in that action.

Guerriere.		Constitution.	
(Rating 38, m'ing 44 gs.)	(Rating 44, m'ing 56 gs.)		
Broadside—Main deck, 14	Broadside—Lower deck 15		
18lb long guns, 252lbs.	25lb long guns 360lbs.		
Quarter deck, 1 9lb do. 9	Upper deck, 1 do. do. 24		
Forecastle, 8 32lb car. 256	Spar do. 12 32lb car. 384		

With probably one or two small boat guns. Men (19 boys included) 263 Measurement, 1084 tons. Superiority on the American side—In weight of metal as—three to two. In number of men as—nine to five. In size of vessel as—three to two. With such disparity of force no one can be surprised at the result of this action. But certainly had the *Guerriere's* men been half as well skilled in the use of the great guns as the *Constitution's* were, the proportion of killed and wounded would not have been so great as fourteen to seventy-eight, nor one ship made a complete wreck of, while the other suffered no material injury in hull or rigging. These are lamentable truths that betrayed a laxity of discipline on board our ships, and which in the course of time would have ruined our navy. Thanks to the war with America, so fatal a catastrophe is not now likely to happen again.

A Cursory Examination of "A Synopsis, &c."

The "naval officer on the American station" sets out with the assertion of the fact, that in every action that occurred during the last war, the superiority either in men, guns or ships, was on the side of the Americans. Our ships are all great seventy-fours; almost as large as Ptolemy's great galley—our guns throw twice or thrice as many pounds of ball, at a broadside; and our men are not only much more numerous but much taller, stronger, braver, more active, dexterous and powerful than the poor little beef-eating jack tars of Old England. The "British naval officer," doubtless intending that his work should be a romance, has set out in the genuine tract of the writers of Sir Tristan, Don Belianis, and the peers of Charlemagne, whose heroes never yielded to any thing less than a misbegotten giant, a magic sword, or an odds of at least fifty to one. This is the true language of fable, and no doubt the admiralty selected for its defender one of the most learned in the romances of the middle ages. Such a writer was well calculated to make the best of a bad bargain, for though he could not actually gain a victory over us, he could tell exactly why we ought to have been victorious, and it is always a marvellous consolation to know the reason of any thing. The ingenuity of the English has been exhausted to find excuses during the last war, and had their officers and sailors been half as zealous in defending the honor of their flag, as their writers, these last had not been put to such straits for excuses, devices and inventions.

One of the arts resorted to in England, for many years past, in all the official statements, as well as that romantic fiction, "Steele's List," has been, and still is, that of stating the whole number of guns, of a captured ship, and only the number at which the vessel capturing was rated, thus always making it appear that they had conquered a superior enemy. But the moment the captured vessel is put on Steele's List, as a government ship, you will find her frequently rated below the vessel by which she was taken. The *Guerriere* at the time of her capture from the French was called a large forty-four, but in Steele's List, we find her transformed into a thirty-eight; nay, even the candid author of the Synopsis notwithstanding his affecting lamentations on account of the national credit being injured by painters and journalists, himself adopts this very practice, with an easy frontery that would surprise us in a writer of any other nation. So far, however, from agreeing with him, that the reputation of the English navy has been tarnished by the painters and journalists, we are of opinion that it is principally owing to the exertions of these worthy gentlemen that it has now any reputation at all.—Were it not for the fine pictures of the one, and the fine stories of the other, it would hardly now be believed that the navy of England was once mistress of the ocean—that "the rolling sea was Britain's wide domain"—or that old Neptune was once absolutely henpecked by Britannia. The observation, however, which the "British officer on the American station" has coupled with his charge against the painters and journalists, is not only just, but it betrays a curious secret, as well as a very diverting perplexity. It seems he is willing that these patriotic rogues should continue this practice of overrating the force of an enemy, and diminishing their own, in respect to the French and Spaniards, because they don't understand English—and therefore can't turn his falsity against the inventors—or if they did, honest John Bull could not understand them, and no harm would be done. But—and "there's the rub"—we Americans can understand and read English, (though it seems we can't write it,) and consequently can expose these unblushing bravadoes and turn them back upon their authors. This is a great stumbling block in the way of the modern writers of British romances. We fear St. George will never kill another dragon, and are really inclined to feel a little sympathy with the poor "British officer on the American station."

The writer of the Synopsis has placed the capture of the Chesapeake at the head of his list, although it did not occur until long after several other engagements which had a different result.

out burnt. The omitted to mention is for men. The hat belonged to Brial account of of each ship engaged, I shall prey, and when a oit. The Officer in deck, including her, by the al such bow-gun fore will be ex- ce of the Consti- rom an American them, and agrees duded from the tation in guns as statement subsequently within six pounds with that published in captain Daeres' letter to the admiralty. The following then is an estimate of the force engaged in that action.

Whether this is to put himself in spirits for his herculean task, or merely to put John Bull in a good humor, we are unable to say. But we cannot forbear giving an opinion that it is ill-judged—he ought to have saved it for a *Bonne-bouche*, at the last, and then his guests might possibly have risen from his feast of Polonius, with more satisfaction. Although, by the aid of a carpenter's rule to measure—together with a reasonable assumption of British ingenuity, we could very easily account for the capture of this vessel, and prove how it ought and should have happened; yet, to make short work of it, we will give the British officer the Chesapeake and let him make the most of her. She was always considered an unfortunate ship, and every one knows the influence of such an impression on the mind of a sailor. But we admit that the Chesapeake was taken by an equal enemy, and further that this exploit requires no further embellishment. It certainly has been already sufficiently embellished, by the painters and journalists heretofore denounced by the British officer; the gentlemen of Suffolk have presented Capt. Broke with a piece of plate, and compared him to Lord Wellington—and his royal master has embellished his merit with the order of knighthood—assuredly then this exploit requires no further embellishment, and if it did we might find it in Capt. Broke's official letter, wherein he assures Mr. Croker that "both ships came out of the action as if they had only been firing salutes." We never heard of such pleasant salutes as these—they killed and wounded eighty four men of the Shannon, and came very near sending that vessel in search of the *Guerriere* and Java. However, we give them the credit of this affair, as well as that of the *Argus*, altho' in the former, the British had five, and in the latter three more guns; and having so done, we require of them equal candor in their acknowledgments. It is really paltry to deny what all the world knows, and we question whether the reputation of England has suffered as much even by her defeats, as by her disingenuous and shuffling attempts to deny them.

For ourselves, we freely admit their claim to the honour of capturing the Chesapeake, and the admission is no small proof of our magnanimity, because it is conceding an honor such as they have not been much accustomed to boast of in their contest with the people of the United States. It is this single solitary instance which is assumed by the British officer as the groundwork, the proof of a claim to superiority which cannot be disputed, although we have sixteen or eighteen proofs to oppose to this modern miracle.

Before the "British officer"—the unfortunate British officer, we might say—begins his examination of his special cases, he attempts to establish certain general facts, which we will also admit without hesitation. He insists upon it that our ships are better ships—that they are better manned—and that their guns are better managed than those of the British. We agree perfectly with him in all these positions, and here we might leave the controversy to rest. What is it that constitutes the superiority which we claim, but these things—and on what other basis can a superiority on the ocean be founded? We have better ships, better men—and we fire better. Really if we were Englishmen, we should not thank the admiralty for such a defence—and were we British naval officers, we should feel excessively mortified at the service to which we belonged being thus stripped of its laurels in this insidious manner to give them to our adversary.

But it seems that the British naval officers never before discovered this superiority in our ships, and men, and guns, and gunnery. Both in the ports of the United States, and in the Mediterranean, during our war with Tripoli, they had various opportunities to become acquainted with the force and armament of our ships. Several of our frigates were at Gibraltar while Sir James Saumarez' fleet lay in the bay. Frequent visits were exchanged between our officers and his, and the latter had ample time and opportunity to form a correct estimate of our men and ships. It was the same when the squadron of admiral Keith lay there. Our frigates were at Malta when the expedition came from Egypt, and also when the British fleet arrived from the Dardanelles: so also when Lord Nelson assumed the command of the fleet that afterwards gained the battle of Trafalgar, as well as when a Russian and English combined fleet came to Syracuse from the Levant, destined to act against Naples, we met them daily. In short, in every part of the Mediterranean vessels of either nation fell in with each other singly, and in squadrons, and prompted either by courtesy or curiosity, the officers almost invariably exchanged visits. On these occasions they were led through every part of the ship, and permitted, nay invited, to examine every thing, for it was a matter of pride to show the high order in which the vessels of the United States were kept.

Yet with this intimate and perfect knowledge of our ships and our men, the British officers always gave the preference to their own, and their opinions gave rise to various excellent jokes that were uttered in and out of the British Parliament at the commencement of the war; but which gradually died away, and are now only remembered by those at whose expense they first came abroad. Shortly before the war, the *Constitution*, under captain Hull, was in an English port, as was also the *Essex*, captain Smith; both were thronged with British naval officers during their stay; and we well remember that on her departure, she was called by these gentlemen—and the phrase went the rounds of the newspapers with great applause—"a bunch of boards"—a fir built ship with a bit of striped hunting at her mast-head! No doubt captain Hull remembered these pleasant jokes, in good time, and poor captain Daeres paid the piper for other people's dancing. Thus the matter stood when the war began,

and it was discovered in a little time by these same sagacious officers, that this same "bunch of pine boards" was unaccountably metamorphosed into a seventy-four in disguise! What excellent judges of ships of war must these officers of the royal navy be, who always preferred their frigates to ours, and nick-named honest Old Ironsides "a bunch of pine boards!" We hardly know which most to admire, the pertinacity with which they at first denied the equality of our ships, or the obstinacy with which they now insist upon their superiority. Your new converts, however, are very apt to go beyond the mark, and so it has fared with John Bull, who has passed from a most exalted contempt, to a most degrading admiration of our prowess, which he demonstrates every day by abusing us manfully, calling us "bastards," and devising very ingenious excuses, for what every body but himself knows is the consequence of his own want of skill and courage, and his senseless presumption of a superiority, which, if he ever possessed, he has lost forever.

It was not until the capture of the *Guerriere*, by "a bunch of pine boards,"—(poor John!)—that the British naval officers discovered, to their great astonishment, no doubt, that the American forty-four-gun frigates were in length equal to our first class of seventy-fours, and built with similar scantling; having their sides, both above and below, at least a fourth thicker than our heaviest frigates:—so says "the British officer on the American station." Ye gods—what a metamorphosis of "a bunch of pine boards!" *Ovid de Tristibus* is nothing to John Bull *de Tristibus*; but fear is a great magnifier as well as multiplier, and doubtless some of these valiant officers, like Jack Falstaff, multiplied "scantling," and "length," and "guns," as that valiant knight did his "men in buckram." There is little doubt that Shakespeare intended this fat knight for the representative of John Bull, and it must be confessed that, with the exception of his wit, there is a striking resemblance.

Captain Daeres had seen American frigates a hundred times, yet this superiority in size and scantling, it seems, never struck him until the *Constitution* gave him such a terrible drubbing; then, forsooth, for the first time, his perception was quickened, as they quicken that of the little boys at school—by the application of the birch. Before that, this gallant commander sported the name of his ship on his top-sails in defiance of the "bunches of pine boards." In the heyday of imaginary superiority, he endorsed a formal challenge on the register of a merchant vessel. Nay, when he saw the *Constitution* running down to him, he said to his men—there is a Yankee frigate: in forty-five minutes she is *certainly* ours:—take her in fifteen and I promise you four months pay." It is also credibly reported that he had prepared a hoghead of molasses and water to treat the Yankee prisoners; but we will not vouch for this liberality, since it happened unluckily for him that he had no opportunity of putting his generous intentions into operation. Whether he would have kept his promise to his ship's crew, must also forever remain a matter of uncertainty.

Now it came to pass that after the capture of the *Guerriere*, the *Macedonian*, the *Java*, and some other of his ships, John Bull called for his two-foot rule, and began to measure the length, and breadth, and thickness of his unfortunate vessels, and found that our frigates were a match for his seventy-fours, a discovery which delighted the people of the United States beyond measure, and gave the last blow to their apprehensions of the British navy. He then got a nice pair of scales, and putting on his spectacles, began to weigh some of our cannon balls that had stuck in his ribs, and to calculate the weight of our iron metal, instead of looking to another kind of mottle, for the true cause of his numerous and deplorable disasters. Some way or other, with the aid of measuring, and weighing, and calculating, and putting on a little here, and clipping away a little there, he managed to make out a tolerable case, at least he managed to put a good face on the matter, and having collected all the force of calculation, misrepresentation, and abuse, he has poured it upon our heads in the form of a synopsis, the first part of which we have given to the readers in our present number.

It will be perceived that the "British officer on the American station" takes up and examines separately each action, stating a sort of debtor and creditor account, and striking the balance with affected arithmetical precision. This method might have had its effect upon us some five or six years ago, when the reputation of English official statements for veracity stood somewhat higher than at present. At all events, it is a method exceedingly well calculated to deceive, since we involuntarily pay a greater regard to these arithmetical statements, without reflecting that a falsehood may as easily be conveyed in figures, as in unqualified assertions. We have only to admit the premises of the author of the Synopsis, which are mere founded on assertion, so far as they relate to our vessels, and all the rest follows of course. It is only necessary, by this mode of establishing facts, to assert that one ship carries thirty-eight twenty-four's, and another forty-nine thirty-two's; and this being assumed, the calculation of the weight of ball fired in every broadside respectively will be undeniable. But this is no way of demonstrating facts, for though it is permitted a reasoner to prove the truth of a hypothetical axiom by the assumption of his premises, another and a more solid basis is necessary in establishing facts.

A writer whose professed object was to give "a fair and impartial summary of naval occurrences between England and America during the late war, and to detect and refute some at least of the numerous falsehoods hitherto so undeviating a feature in the maritime records of the latter power," ought certainly to have had the courtesy to inform us how he came by the basis