

The American Navy

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A SHORT BIBLIOGRAPHY

TO
MY COMRADES OF THE NAVY
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Rear-Admiral French Ensor Chadwick was born at Morgantown, W. Va., February 29, 1844. He was appointed to the U. S. Naval Academy from West Virginia (then part of Virginia) in 1861, and graduated in November, 1864. In the summer of 1864 he was attached to the *Marblehead* in pursuit of the Confederate steamers *Florida* and *Tallahassee*. After the Civil War he served successively in a number of vessels, and was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander in 1869; was instructor at the Naval Academy; on sea service, and on lighthouse duty (1870-1882); Naval Attaché at the American Embassy in London (1882-1889); commanded the *Yorktown* (1889-1891); was Chief Intelligence Officer (1892-1893); and Chief of the Bureau of Equipment (1893-1897).

During the war with Spain he was Admiral Sampson's Chief of Staff, and also commanded the flagship *New York*. He participated in all the more important engagements in the Atlantic during the war; was advanced five numbers in rank for conspicuous conduct in battle, and was presented with a sword of honor by citizens of his native state.

From 1900 to 1903 he was President of the Naval War College at Newport; was promoted Rear-Admiral October 11, 1903, and in 1904 became commander-in-chief of the South Atlantic squadron. He retired February 28, 1906.

Rear-Admiral Chadwick is one of the most influential friends of the United States navy; he has written extensively on

diplomatic and naval topics, and is the author of "Causes of the Civil War" in the "American Nation Series." He is also much interested in problems of municipal government, is a member of the Newport Representative Council, a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters, corresponding member of the Massachusetts Historical Society, member of the American Historical Association, etc.

INTRODUCTION

THE navy in all countries has ever been, and, as far as we can now judge, ever will be, a preëminent instrument of government. It was through her navy that Greece destroyed the power of Persia; Rome that of Carthage; the allies at Lepanto that of the Turks; England that of Holland and later that of France in America; the navy of France, in turn, caused the relinquishment of Great Britain's sovereignty over the thirteen colonies which formed the United States, and a generation later it was the British navy which made the efforts of the great Napoleon the "baseless fabric of a vision."

Coming to days within the ken of many still living, the navy was the power which made possible the preservation of the Union in our great Civil War by the cutting off of the Southern Confederacy from its means of support by sea and reducing its forces thereby to practical inanition. For had the Confederacy had free access to the sea and control of the Mississippi River, no armies of the North could have conquered well-supplied armies of the South. So, too, the control of the sea decided the outcome of the Spanish War. When Sampson's fleet destroyed Spain's only battle squadron off Santiago de Cuba, Spain could no longer reinforce her army in Cuba, and surrender was a necessity. Even as this is written Germany's every sea outlet is closed by the British fleet, so superior in number to the German, and German commerce on the sea is for the time entirely swept away, leaving Great Britain for the moment navally and commercially supreme upon the ocean. As one

attempts to look into the future the vastness of the possible changes startles the imagination, but in it all is ever present the power that goes with the ubiquitous warship, from whose threat no port of the world is free. Military power fades to insignificance, through its narrow limits of mobility, when compared with the meaning of a great fleet. The present sketch of history is to show what the warship has done for us.

THE AMERICAN NAVY

CHAPTER I

WHEN Great Britain attempted to reduce to obedience the rebellious colonies which were to form the United States of America she was dealing with a people who in the North at least had long been conversant with the building and sailing of ships. A New England built ship entered the Thames in 1638, only eighteen years after the landing of the Pilgrims at Plymouth, Massachusetts. The New England men, with a sterile coast, with limitless fishing grounds and unsurpassed harbors, turned as naturally to the sea for livelihood as did the South, more kindly treated by nature, to agriculture. In 1670 it was estimated that two thirds of the British shipping was employed in the American trade. The Dutch, who had been great carriers on the sea, were excluded from this trade by the navigation laws of the period. Scotland was not admitted to the trade of the American plantations until her union with England in 1707, and Ireland not until 1780, while in 1670 nothing could be imported into the American colonies but what was laden in England in English-built ships. But while none of their products could be carried anywhere (except to other of the plantations) till they were first landed in England, the ships built in America were reckoned as English, and this fact gave great impetus to American shipbuilding. American shipping prospered amazingly. But while thus prospering, it was the attempted repression of our commerce afloat and ashore (which included such things as forbidding the exportation of hats, restricting the manufacture of iron, and forbidding commerce with the

foreign-owned islands of the West Indies) which did much more to develop the idea of independence than did the Stamp Act. But the net result of conditions was to foster shipping, and our competition had so increased by 1725 that in that year “the shipwrights of the river Thames came up to Whitehall with a complaint that their business had declined and their workmen emigrated because the plantations furnished England with ships.”

On the register of the underwriters at Lloyd’s for 1775, comprehending the shipping of the three preceding years, there were 3,908 British-built vessels of 605,545 tons, and 2,311 of American build with a tonnage of 373,618 tons. The average size of the ship of the time was about 400 tons displacement. One 100 feet in length and 26 to 28 feet broad was a good-sized ship. They were but cockle boats in comparison with the vast ships of to-day, many of which are full a hundred times 400 tons displacement.

The foregoing will show that when there came a time to dispute the sea with Great Britain there was no difficulty in supplying the ships, and the many ironworks which had been established, particularly in Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, despite Great Britain’s restrictions, could furnish guns in the manufacture of which our foundries were adepts before the war.

The larger men-of-war of the period were greater in size than the largest merchantmen. The greater ships-of-the-line (by which expression is meant those which could take their place in the line of battle, the formation of which was in a single extended column) varied from 4,000 to 3,000 tons

displacement. The larger of these, which carried guns on three main decks and some light guns on the upper deck, to the number altogether of 100, or even 120, were 180 to 190 feet on the gun deck, with about 53 feet beam. The most usual size, however, was the "74," carrying nominally that number of guns, but usually six or eight more, on two main decks (and thus known as a two-decker). This class was about 168 feet long on the gun deck and 47 feet broad. Below this class there were many ships of sixty, fifty, or even forty-four guns, with two gun decks. Such, for a long period, formed part of the line of battle.

The frigates had but one covered gun deck. They varied in length from 115 to 130 feet on the gun deck, and were from 32 to 36 feet beam, roughly a fourth of their length. They formed no part of a line of battle, their duty when accompanying a fleet being to remain clear of the line and repeat the admiral's signals. There was also a small class of ship called a sloop-of-war, which carried guns on only the upper, or spar, deck as it came to be called. These vessels were ship-rigged; that is, they had three masts with square sails on each. They were usually about 100 feet long and about 27 feet beam.

The three-deckers, or 100-gun ships, carried about 900 men; the 74's about 600; the frigates about 160. The guns of the period were of course all smooth-bores and muzzle-loaders. In the large ships, the heavier guns, usually 32-pounders, were carried on the lower gun decks to give stability to the ship; 18's or 24's were carried on the middle deck, 9's and 12's on the upper, 9's and 6's on the quarter deck, which was the part of the upper deck aft of the mainmast, and on the forecastle, which was the part of the upper deck forward of the foremast;

the space between the two was called the waist. The larger frigates usually carried 18's on the gun deck; the smaller, 12's or 9's. The sloops carried 9's or 6's. The greatest range of even the heavier guns was but little over 2,000 yards, as the ports rarely allowed more than 8° or 9° elevation. Such guns were but toys compared with modern ordnance, but they were common alike to all nations, and all were thus on the same footing.

An immense difference between that day and this was in the motive power which then and for two and a half generations later consisted of lofty wooden masts, reaching skyward in the greater ships about 200 feet, crossed by "yards," the larger of which were about 100 feet long, the former supported by a great mass of rigging known as shrouds and stays, the latter moved by "braces" and the sails worked by a maze of running rigging. All this, of course, was subject to being shot away, and ships were thus frequently completely dismasted or disabled in action. The same result was often, too, produced by a gale of wind, it being no uncommon thing for a fleet to be thus completely incapacitated for the continuance of a voyage.

Weeks or fortnights were spent in a voyage now done in days. Of certainty as to time of reaching port, there was none. And amid all there was the danger from enemies, legal or piratical, for the world was only slowly ridding itself of the latter; and from the inherent dangers of the sea itself to the clumsy ships which slowly worked their way across it. How great these last were, through the ignorance at that time of the law of storms, may be known by the fate of a great fleet which in 1782 left the West Indies under Admiral Graves, with ten line-of-battle ships

convoying nearly a hundred merchantmen. Among the former were six of the prizes taken in Rodney's great naval battle of April 12, 1782. Caught in a fierce gale southeast of Nova Scotia, five of the battleships foundered with nearly all on board. One of those which went down with every soul was the *Ville de Paris*, which had been the flagship of the unfortunate Count de Grasse. The total loss of men was estimated at 3,500.

Such was the setting of the period which saw the birth of the first American navy, which was to have an existence of but eight short years, to be succeeded, however, nine years after (1794) by the modest beginnings which have grown into the great fleet of to-day, and whose history is one of uninterrupted success and honor.

CHAPTER II

IN SEPTEMBER, 1744, there met at Philadelphia, then our foremost city, representatives of each of the thirteen colonies, called together on account of the increasing difficulties which had arisen with the mother country. These difficulties arose mainly from the tendency of parliament to govern the colonies as it would, say, any county of England. This right the Americans denied. They were good subjects of the King, but they objected to parliamentary rule. The underlying idea which governed the action of the Americans was thus that of a federalism which only in these latter days has laid hold in any considerable degree of the minds of the English, who now debate the possibility of England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa becoming states of a federation somewhat akin to our own. But at the time of the outbreak of our Revolution there was no widespread idea of separation. It was, however, in the air, and by some openly advocated. Had there been a complete renunciation of the right of parliament to make laws governing the colonies there would, for the time at least, have been a reconciliation. It was upon this principle we divided. Thus the war began.

There was at this time on our coast a British naval force of four ships of from seventy to fifty guns (these at Boston), and twenty from twenty to six guns distributed from New Hampshire to Florida. The whole was a very moderate force considering the long-standing discontent and the difficulties of

the existing situation. The British navy, in which, as in the administration of every other department of the British public service of the period, inefficiency and dishonesty reigned to an almost unbelievable degree, had been allowed to run down sadly after the Seven Years' War which ended in 1763. The total number of ships was but 270 and the number of seamen but 18,000. Before the war closed the ships were to number 468, of which 174 were ships-of-the-line (carrying from sixty to one hundred guns), and the seamen were to number 110,000.

The situation of the United States was much akin to that of the Southern Confederacy. Its resources were too meagre to carry on a war without the importation of much that was necessary to keep an army in efficiency. Thus the true plan of England was a strict blockade and the reduction to inanition of our forces, such as we ourselves carried on against the South in our Civil War. This action was advocated strongly by Viscount Barrington, the Secretary for War, who urged that the navy only should be employed, and that the ships should take possession of all our ports and establish a complete blockade. Fortunately for the revolutionists, his advice was not heeded.

On April 19, 1775, at Concord and Lexington, the long-prepared fagots of revolution were lighted into flame. Two months later, June 17th, came Bunker Hill and the immediate assembling near Boston (where lay almost the whole of the British force in America) of a multitude of country people ill-provided with everything that goes to make the efficiency of an army but high determination and spirit. By a stroke of

prescience which would seem a providence, Washington was appointed the commander-in-chief.

There had been fights afloat between the Americans and the British some years before the actual outbreak of the Revolution. In 1769 the sloop *Liberty*, employed in revenue protection, had been seized and burned by the people of Newport, Rhode Island; in 1772 a schooner, the *Gaspee*, used for similar service in Narragansett Bay and which had grounded while in chase of a suspected vessel near Providence, was boarded by a party of men who burned her, and but a month after the first fights ashore occurred there were attacks with some loss of life upon an armed schooner and barges which attempted the seizure of livestock on the islands of Boston Bay. The lively fights at Machias in June, 1775, in which the inhabitants had captured the sloop *Unity* and another which had been sent to Machias for lumber and which were under the escort of an armed tender, the *Margaretta*, were, however, the first of the actual War of the Revolution. They are proud recollections of local history and have caused the name of the town to appear on the navy list as that of a small cruiser of to-day. On August 9, 1775, the *Falcon*, sloop-of-war under Captain Linzee, pursued into Gloucester harbor two schooners bound from the West Indies; one he seized, and the other succeeding in getting into the harbor was attacked by boats from the *Falcon*. The militia and inhabitants gathered, and the action which came on and which lasted several hours resulted in the capture of thirty-five of the *Falcon's* men who had come into the harbor in the captured schooner and in their own boats, both schooners remaining in the hands of the Americans.

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