

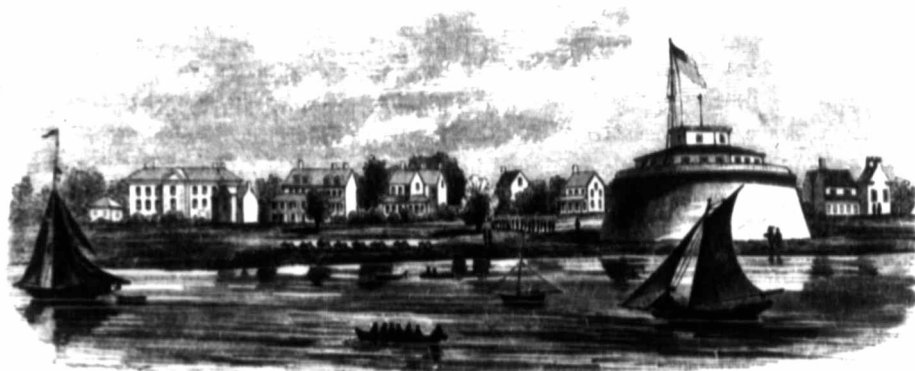
Outrage by a British Cruiser.

Commodore Rodgers.

The Frigate *President* ordered to Sea.

Since the favorable arrangement with France, British cruisers hovering upon the American coast had become more and more annoying to commerce. A richly-laden American vessel bound to France had been captured within thirty miles of New York;¹ and early in the month of May a British frigate, supposed to be the *Guerriere*, Captain Dacres, stopped an American brig only eighteen miles from New York, and a young man, known to be a native of Maine, was taken from her and impressed into the British service.² Similar instances had lately occurred, and the government resolved to send out one or two of the new frigates³ immediately for the protection of the coast trade from the depredators.

The *President*, Captain Ludlow, was then anchored off Fort Severn,⁴ at Annapolis,



FORT OR BATTERY SEVERN, AT ANNAPOLIS.

bearing the broad pennant of Commodore Rodgers, the senior officer of the navy. The commodore was with his family at Havre de Grace, seventy miles distant;⁵ the *President's* sailing-master was at Baltimore, forty miles distant; her purser and chaplain were at Washington, an equal distance from their posts, and all was listlessness on board the frigate, for no sounds of war were in the air. Suddenly, at three o'clock in the afternoon of the 7th of May, while Captain Ludlow was dining on board the sloop-of-war *Argus*, lying near the *President*, the gig was seen, about five miles distant, sailing at the rate of ten miles an hour, with the commodore's broad pennant flying, denoting that he was on board.⁶ Rodgers was soon on the *President's* quarter-deck. He had received orders⁷ from his government to put to sea at once in search of the offending British vessel, and on the 10th he weighed anchor

* May 6, 1811.

Fourth, went before the Privy Council in great state, and was sworn in as regent of the kingdom. He held that office until the death of his father in 1820, when he became king.

¹ Hildreth, Second Series, iii., 245.

² Although the sea was running high, the captain of the *Spitfire* (the arrested brig) went with the young man on board the frigate, and assured the commander that he had known him from boyhood as a native of Maine. The insolent reply was, "All that may be so, but he has no protection, and that is enough for me."—*New York Herald*, May 11, 1811.

³ The American navy then in active service consisted of the *President*, *Constitution*, and *United States*, 44 each; the *Essex*, 32; *John Adams*, 24; *Wasp* and *Hornet*, 18 each; *Argus* and *Siren*, 16 each; *Nautilus*, *Enterprise*, and *Vixen*, 12 each; and a large flotilla of gun-boats, commanded principally by sailing-masters selected from the officers of merchant vessels.—Cooper, ii., 118.

⁴ The present Fort of Battery Severn, composed of a circular base and hexagonal tower, is upon the site of a fort of the same name, erected, with other fortifications, in 1776. It was then little more than a group of breast-works. These were strengthened at the beginning of the war in 1812. The present fort, seen in the picture, is rather a naval than a military work, its principal use being for a practice-battery for the students in the Naval Academy there, and for the defense of the naval arsenal, school, and officers' quarters. That academy (which was removed to Newport, Rhode Island, on the breaking out of the civil war in the spring of 1861, and its buildings at Annapolis used for hospital purposes during the conflict) was to the navy what the West Point Academy is to the army. The grounds about Fort Severn are very beautiful, and delight the eyes of all visitors. In addition to the Naval Monument there, already mentioned (page 124), are others, both elegant and expensive.

⁵ The residence of Commodore Rodgers at Havre de Grace, at that time, was yet standing when I visited that town in November, 1861. It stood at near the junction of Washington and St. John Streets, and was occupied by William Poplar. It was a two-story brick house, substantially built, and well preserved, as seen in the engraving on the next page. It will be referred to again, in an account of my visit to Havre de Grace above alluded to.

⁶ Letter from an officer on board the *President* in the *New York Herald*, June 3, 1811.

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