

[Written Expressly for "THE REVIEW"]
PAUL JONES AND DENIS DUVAL.

(Continued from our last.)

"As I said, I was on the main deck aft. We were all lying stretched out in the larboard ports to see and hear what we could, when Captain Pearson himself hailed, 'What ship is that?' I could not hear their answer, and he hailed again, and then said, if they did not answer, he would fire. We all took this as good as an order, and, hearing nothing, tumbled in and blazed away. The *Poor Richard* fired at the same time. It was at that first broadside of hers, that two of Jones' heavy guns, below his main deck, burst. We could see that as we sighted for our next broadside, because we could see how they hove up the gun-deck above them. As for our shot, I suppose they all told. We had ten eighteen pounders in that larboard battery below. I do not see why any shot should have failed.

"However, he had no thought of being pounded to pieces by his own firing and ours, and so he bore right down on us. He struck our quarter, just forward of my forward gun,—struck us hard, too. We had just fired our second shot, and then he closed, so I could not bring our two guns to bear. This was when he first tried to fasten the ships together. But they would not stay fastened. He could not bring a gun to bear,—having no forward ports that served him, till we fell off again, and it was then that Captain Pearson asked in that strange stillness, if he had struck. Jones answered, 'I have not begun to fight.' And so it proved. Our sails were filled, he backed his top-sails, and we wore short round. As he laid us athwart-hawse, or as we swung by him, our jib-boom ran into his mizzen-rigging. They say Jones himself then fastened our boom to his mainmast. Somebody did, but it did not hold, but one of our anchors hooked his quarter, and so we fought, fastened together, to the end,—both now fighting our starboard batteries, and being fixed stern to stern.

"On board the *Scrapis* our ports were not open on the starboard side, because we had been firing on the other. And as we ran across and loosened those guns, the men amidship actually found they could not open their ports, the *Richard* was so close. They therefore fired their first shots right through our own port-lids, and blew them off. I was so far aft that my port-lids swung free.

"What I said, in beginning this letter, will explain to you the long continuance of the action after this moment, when you would say, it must be ended by boarding, or in some other way, very soon. As soon as we on our main deck got any idea of the *Richard's* main deck. We saw that almost nobody replied to us there. In truth, two of the six guns which made her lower starboard battery had burst, and Jones's men would not fight what were left, nor do I blame them. Above, their gun-deck had been hoisted up, and, as it proved the next day, we were cutting them right through. We pounded away at what we could see,—and much more at what we could not see,—for it was now night, and there was a little smoke, as you may fancy. But above, the *Richard's* upper deck was a good deal higher than ours, and there Jones had dragged across upon his quarter a piece from the larboard battery, so that he had three nine-pounders, with which he was doing his best, almost raking us, as you may imagine. No one ever said so to me, that I know, but I doubt whether we could get elevation enough from any of our light guns on our upper deck (nines) to damage his battery much.

he was so much higher than we. As for musketry, there is not much sharp-shooting when you are firing at night in the smoke, with the decks swaying under you.

"Many a man has asked me why neither side boarded,—and, in fact, there is a popular impression that Jones took our ship by boarding, as he did not. Such questions are easier asked than answered. About ten o'clock, an English officer, who had commanded the Union letter-of-marque, which Jones had taken a few days before, came scrambling through one of our ports from the *Richard*. He went up aft to Captain Pearson at once, and told him that the *Richard* was sinking, that they had had to release all her prisoners (and she had hundreds) from the hold and spar deck, himself among them, because the water came in so fast, and that, if we would hold on a few minutes more, the ship was ours. Every word of this was true, except the last. Hearing this, Captain Pearson—who, if you understand, was over my head, for he kept the quarter-deck almost throughout—hailed to ask if they had struck. He got no answer, Jones in fact being at the other end of his ship, on his quarter, pounding away at our main mast. Pearson then called for boarders; they were formed hastily, and dashed on board to take the prize. But the *Richard* had not struck, though I know some of her men had called for quarters. Her men were ready for us,—under cover, Captain Pearson says in his despatch,—Jones himself seized a pike and headed his crew, and our men fell back again. One of the accounts says we tried to board earlier, as soon as the vessels were made fast to each other. But of this I knew nothing.

"Meanwhile Jones' people could not stay on his lower deck,—and could not do anything, if they had stayed there. They worked their way above. His main deck (of twelve) was fought more successfully, but his great strength was on his upper deck and in his tops. To read his own account, you would almost think he fought the battle himself with his three quarter-deck cannon, and I suppose it would be hard to overstate what he did do. Both he and Captain Pearson ascribe the final capture of the *Scrapis* to this strange incident.

The men in the *Richard's* tops were throwing hand-grenades upon our decks, and at last one fellow worked himself out to the end of the main yard with a bucket filled with these missiles, lighted them one by one, and threw them fairly down our main hatchway. Here, as our ill luck ordered, was a row of our eighteen pounder cartridges, which the powder-boys had left there as they went for more,—our fire, I supposed, having slackened there: cartridges were then just coming into use in the navy. One of these grenades lighted the row, and the flash passed—bang—bang—bang—back to me. Oh, it was awful! Some twenty of our men were fairly blown to pieces. There were other men who were stripped naked, with nothing on but the collars of their shirts and their wristbands. Farther aft there was not so much powder, perhaps, and the men were not scorched or burned more than they were wounded. I do not know how I escaped, but I do know that there was hardly a man forward of my guns who did escape,—some hurt,—and the groaning and shrieking were terrible. Imagine all this,—in the utter darkness of smoke and night below decks, almost every lantern blown out or smashed. There were agonies which I have never trusted my tongue to tell. Yet I see, in my journal, in a boy's mock man way, this is passed by,

as almost nothing. I did not think so or feel so, I can tell you.

"It was after this that the effort was made to board. I know I had filled some buckets of water from our lee ports, and had got some of the worst hurt of my men below, and was trying to understand what Brooks, who was jammed, but not burned, thought we could do, to see if we could not at least clear things enough to fight one gun, when boarders were called, and he left me. Cornish, who had really been captain of the other gun, was badly hurt, and had gone below. Then came the effort to board, which, as I say, failed; and that was really our last effort. About halfpast ten, Captain Pearson struck. He was not able to bring a gun to bear on the *Alliance*, had she closed with us; his ship had been on fire a dozen times, and the explosion had wholly disabled our main battery, which had been, until this came, our chief strength. But so uncertain and confused was it all, that I know, when I heard the cry, 'They've struck,' I took it for granted it was the *Richard*. In fact, Captain Pearson had struck our flag with his own hands. The men would not expose themselves to the fire from the *Richard's* tops. Mr. Mayrant, a fine young fellow, one of Jones' midshipmen, was wounded in boarding us after we struck, because some of our people did not know we had struck. I know, when Wallis, our first lieutenant, heard the cry, he ran up-stairs,—supposing that Jones had struck to us, and not we to him.

"It was Lieutenant Dale who boarded us. He is still living, a fine old man, at Philadelphia. He found Captain Pearson on the lee of our quarter deck again, and said,—

"Sir, I have orders to send you on board the ship along side."

"Up the companion comes Wallis, and says to Captain Pearson,—

"Have they struck?"

"No, Sir," said Dale,—"the contrary. He has struck to us."

"Wallis would not take it, and said to Pearson,—

"Have you struck, Sir?"

"And he had to say he had. Wallis said, 'I have nothing more to say,' and turned to come down to us, but Dale would not let him, Wallis said he would silence the lower deck guns, but Dale sent some one else, and took them aboard the *Richard*. Little Duval—a volunteer on board, not yet rated as midshipman—went with them. Jones gave back our captain's sword, with the usual speech about braver. But they quarrelled awfully afterwards.

"I suppose Paul Jones was himself astonished when daylight showed the condition of his ship. I am sure we were. His ship was still on fire: ours had been a dozen times, but was out. Wherever our main battery could hit him, we had torn his ship to pieces,—knocked in and knocked out the sides. There was a complete breach from the main mast to the stern. You could see the sky and sea through the old hulk anywhere. Indeed, the wonder was that the quarter deck did not fall in. The ship was sinking fast, and the pumps would not free her. For us, our jibboom had been wrenched off at the beginning; our main mast and mizzen top fell as we struck, and at day-break the wreck was not cleared away. Jones put Lieutenant Lunt on our vessel that night, but the next day he removed him wounded, and finally all his people, to the *Scrapis*, and at ten the *Poor Richard* went to the bottom. I have always wondered that your Naval Commissioners never named another frigate for her.