lision with the foreign vessels in Cuban waters.

These are matters that can be thoroughly appreciated only by professional men; and although there is not an officer in our Navy who would hesitate to command such vessels as we have, in time of war, yet naval men feel that they will be compelled to sacrifice life and reputation if ever they go into action with monitors outside a harbor.

To the younger officers, who have not experienced the inconveniences of war, and look upon it merely as a pleasant episode, it matters little in what sort of vessel they go to sea. They accept any situation, and delude themselves with the hope that, no matter what the odds against them, victory will perch upon the banner of the U.S. Navy. But there will be a rude awakening to the actual condition of affairs if we do not follow the example of foreign nations and place our Navy in a proper state for service.

There is not a navy in the world that is not in advance of us as regards ships and guns, and I, in common with the older officers of the service; feel an anxiety on the subject which can only be appreciated by those who have to command fleets and take them into battle.

If called upon at this time to command the naval forces of the United States, in case of hostilites, a position which it is my ambition and by right to fill, I should be put to my wit's end to succeed with such an incongruous set of vessels as we now possess. Prudence would probably recommend that they be shut up in port and no fleet operations attempted with them—sending the wooden vessels abroad singly to do all the damage possible until captured by the enemy; our 50 gun frigates perhaps succumbing to a 2 gun clipper armed with 10 inch rifles, and our smaller cruisers driven off by merchant vessels carrying rifle guns of lesser calibre.

This is no exaggeration. It is simply what will occur when we go to war, and it would be much better to have no navy at all than one like the present, half armed and with only half speed, unless we inform the world that our establishment is only intended for times of peace, and to protect the missionaries against South Sea savages and eastern fanatics.

So different was the speed of the various vessels in the West Indies, during exercises in fleet formations, that considerable difficulty was encountered in getting them in anything like order; and, as far as gaining experience in fleet sailing was concerned, the object could have been better attained by employing the same number of steam launches.

I do not mean to say that the officers derived no benefit from the fleet exercises, since they soon became aware of the inefficiency of their vessels for war purposes, and the first step toward improvement is for a nation to understand its weakness.

Of all the wooden vessels built during the rebellion, but three available ones are left, constructed of unseasoned timber, the best that could be procured at the time. All the others are decayed and laid up, encumbering our yards, or broken to pieces, or sold out of service.

Of the forty eight so called iron clads now on the Navy Register, thirty one can never be of the least use in peace or war, unless sunk as obstructions to channels.

Out of the ninety nine wooden vessels on the list, only thirty nine come properly under the head of "vessels of war," that is, vessels propelled by steam and sails, and carrying efficient guns; and of all these not one could contend with a foreign ship of equal size. So, in fact, we have only thirty nine wooden ships of war and six monitors, out one of which, the Dictator, has good speed, and she is sadly out of repair.

There were two classes of vessels commenced between 1862 and 1865, the Connecticut and the Congress class, which, had they been built of seasoned timber would have proved themselves efficient with proper batteries. These ships have been severly criticised, but nevertheless have proved good vessels, and had they a little more beam would be remarkably fine ones. They were constructed at a time when we were threatened with foreign interference in our domestic affairs, and answered the purpose of preventing it. They were afterward improved by adding another deck, which enabled them to berth their crews comfortably.

This type of vessel is now being built by the British, with more beam and greater steam power.

But with three exceptions, all our vessels of this class have passed away, those on the stocks being too much decayed over to be launched.

It will be readily imagined what a terrible scourge vessels like those just mentioned would be to an enemy's commerce in time of war, and it is likely that similar vessels with improved machinery and additional beam will again be introduced into the Navy, for it is certain they were the only ones in the service that proved themselves fast and good sea boats at the same time.

For all that, such ships are only fit to cruise against an enemy's commerce; as for want of resisting power they could never form a part of a line of battle in a fleet fight.

One or two of these vessels took part in the exercises at Key West, but I do not see that they were better adapted for that kind of business than the rest.

You have no doubt a general knowledge of the condition of all the ships in the Navy, but it is not to be expected, in the multiplicity of your duties, that you could be as familiar with the subject as a professional man; I will therefore recapitulate what appears to me to be the state of the several vessels at the present time. Perhaps a clear statement of their condition may induce Congress to do something towards renovating the naval service.

Our largest vessels, the Colorado, Franklin, Wabash, and Minnesota, each mounting about 40 guns and costing in the aggregate nearly four millions of dollars, were built nineteen years ago. With the exception of the Franklin, they have only auxiliary engines, and their average speed does not exceed seven knots, the Franklin alone making nine knots.

They have been frequently repaired and will not stand much more pulling to pieces. It would be cheaper to take their machinery out and use them for receiving ships, building a smaller class of vessels to supply their place.

It is not necessary for a commander in chief of a squadron to have one of these large vessels for a flag ship. He could perform his duties better in a smaller vessel with much less expense to the Government.

For instance, a ship of the Tennessee class can be maintained at one third less expense than the Franklin, and with the addition of an improved battery, would be a much more formidable vessel.

The Connecticut, Antietam, California, Delaware, Java, New York, Iowa, Niagara, Pennsylvania, and Susquehanna have all gone to decay, only the Tennessee and Florida being in a condition for service. Of the Lancaster class, the Lancaster, now on the coast of Brazil, is so much out of repair that it would be unsafe to send her home, except in summer. She could hardly weather a winter gale. This ship is a slow sailer, and can only be repaired at great expense. Her last repairs were made with unseasoned timber, which has shrunk away from the live oak.

The Brooklyn, Pensacola, Hartford, and Richmond are slow, old fashioned ships, and should be rebuilt on new models and provided with improved machinery and guns, a portion of the latter rifles.

The Severn is worn out, and the Congress and Worcester after their present cruises is up cannot be repaired to advantage, but must be entirely renewed. The Powhatan is a good side wheel vessel with fair speed, and, though not a perfectly efficient cruiser, is still a useful ship of war. The Saranac is an old side wheel vessel, rather slow, and would stand no chance in battle with a ship of the modern type of half her size.

The Alaska, Benicia, Omaha, and Plymouth are fine vessels of their class and approach perfection nearer than any other of our vessels, yet they cannot work their batteries with effect, either because they have not sufficient beam for the guns, or the guns are to long for the beam.

The Lackawanna, Ticonderoga, Canandaigua, Monongahela and Shenandoah are a handy class of vessel, but are without speed. They have been much improved by alterations during the last four years, but no one would now think of building ships on their models.

The Juniata, Ossipee, Iroquois, Kearsarge, Wachusett, Mohican, Tuscarora, and Wyoming are all fair vessels, but need improved machinery and guns. Of the Nantucket, Narragansett, Ashuelot, and Monocacy, the two former are worn out, and the two latter are only fit for surveying duty in Chinese waters.

The Swatara has proved herself a good vessel, and has considerable speed. When the Quinnebaug, Galena, Vandalia, Marion, and the eight new vessels are finished, it is to be hoped they will do as well.

The Kansas class of vessels—six in number—should be rebuilt on new principles, with improved batteries and machinery.

The Frolic, Gettysburg, Tallapoosa, Wasp, Palos, and Despatch, are nothing but despatch vessels; the last named would, in time of war, be the only efficient one.

The seventeen sailing vessels are, with one exception, laid up in ordinary, where they will probably remain until wanted for store and receiving ships, and the four store ships are mostly worn out.

As you are well aware, of our iron clad monitors, the Ajax, Canonicus, Dictator, Mahopac, Manhattan, and Saugus are in good condition as far as they can be made available, and are laid up temporarily in Pensacola; and the Catskill, Jason, Lehigh, Montauk, Nahant, Nantucket, Passaic, and Wyandotte are undergoing repairs to place them in the same condition, which will occupy about ten months.

These vessels might have been made stronger and more impervious to heavy rifled shot, by putting an additional 5 inches of solid plating on their turrets and hulls, but in that case it would have been impossible to send them outside a harbor, and the expense would have been so great that it would have been better to construct new vessels.