

Reduction of the Army. The Navy. Privateers. Captives released. Dartmoor Prisoners.

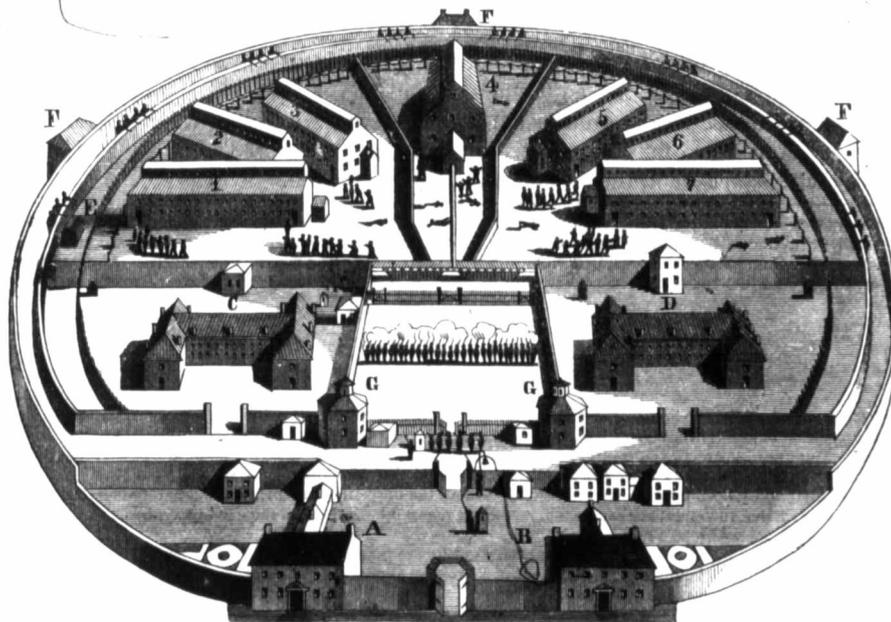
army was placed on a peace footing, and was reduced to 10,000 men, by which reduction about 1800 officers were compelled to leave the service. The navy was left where it stood, with an additional appropriation, for its gradual increase, of \$200,000 annually for three years. The national vessels and privateers were drawn from the ocean as speedily as possible,¹ and prisoners in the hands of both parties were released as quickly as proper arrangements could be made for their enlargement.

In connection with the release of captives, a circumstance occurred at a dépôt for prisoners in England which caused great exasperation on the part of the American people. That dépôt was situated on Dartmoor, a desolate region in Devonshire, where it was constructed in 1809 for the confinement of French prisoners of war. It comprised thirty acres, inclosed within double walls, with seven distinct prison-houses, with inclosures. At the time of the ratification of the treaty of peace, there were about six thousand American prisoners there, including twenty-five hundred impressed American seamen, who had refused to fight in the British Navy against their countrymen, and were there when the war broke out in 1812. Some had been there ten or eleven years. The place was in charge of Captain T. G. Shortland, with a military guard. That officer was charged with much unfeeling conduct toward the prisoners, accounts of which reached America, from time to time, and produced great irritation in the public mind.

There was much delay in the release of the Dartmoor prisoners. It was nearly three months after the treaty of peace had been signed before they were permitted to know the fact. From that time^a they were in daily expectation of release. Delay caused uneasiness and impatience, and there was evidently a disposition to attempt an escape. Symptoms of insubordination appeared on the 4th of April, when the prisoners demanded bread instead of hard biscuit, and refused to receive the latter. On the evening of the 6th,^b so reluctantly did the prisoners obey orders to retire to their quarters, that, when some of them, with

^a March 20,
1815.

^b April.



DARTMOOR PRISON IN 1815.²

¹ The whole number of British vessels of every class captured by Americans during the war was estimated at 1750. An official British return stated that, during the same time, British ships had captured and destroyed 1683 American vessels of every class, manned by upward of 18,000 seamen. See page 1007.

² This is a careful copy of an engraving attached to a *Journal of a Young Man of Massachusetts, late a Surgeon on board an American Privateer*, who was a prisoner there at the time of the massacre, and an eye-witness of much of

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