

ly answered by one from the Little Belt—each believing the other to have fired intentionally and neither being disposed to brook the slightest insult, a furious engagement began which lasted for half an hour. when the Sloop having the greater part of her standing and the whole of her running rigging (of which not a brace or bowline was left) cut to pieces—her masts and yards badly wounded, her gaff shot away, upper works completely riddled and hull in general much struck with several shot between wind and water, having fallen off so that she could not bring a gun to bear from the loss of her after sail ceased firing, and the President shortly after did the same. Commodore Rodgers then hailed the Little Belt and learned her name, of her nationality he could have been in no doubt, but the freshness of the wind prevented Captain Bingham from learning the name of his antagonist. Commodore Rodgers then hailed to know if the Sloop had struck and was answered that *she had not*. Nothing but the lowness of her hull prevented her being sunk and her loss was very severe, being 1 midshipman and 10 seamen killed and 21 wounded, or over one fourth of his crew disabled.

The President is said to have had her sides and rigging slightly injured, one 32 pound shot in her foremast and another in her mainmast, her loss is said to be *one boy* wounded.

Immediately after the action the Frigate wore and running a short distance to leeward came to on the starboard tack to repair her trifling damages. The Sloop brought to on the port tack and commenced repairing damages and stopping leaks.

At day light on the 17th, the President, now about nine miles to windward, bore up under topsails and foresail to all appearance ready to renew the action. At 8 a.m. she passed within hail of the Sloop, when Commodore Rodgers hailed—"Ship ahoy! I'll send a boat on board if you please, Sir?"—"Very well, Sir," was Capt. Bingham's reply,—the boat came under the command of the first Lieutenant of the President with a message from the Commodore, to the effect that he lamented "the unfortunate affair," and had he known the British ship's force was so inferior he would not have fired into her. On being asked why he had fired at all, the Lieutenant replied that the *Little Belt* had fired first. This was most positively denied by Captain Bingham. Lieut. Creighton in the name of the Commodore then offered every assistance and suggested that Captain Bingham had better put into one of the ports of the United States—this he declined—the boat returned. The Frigate made sail to the Westward, and the *Little Belt* as soon as she was able to the Northward. On the 23rd the latter was joined by the *Goree*, and on the 28th the two vessels anchored in Halifax.

Much has been written on this action, a great deal of partizanship displayed and a large amount of misrepresentation indulged

in, but investigation has established the fact that Commodore Rodgers commanding a neutral Frigate, acting under the excitement consequent on the illegal acts of the *Guerriere*, suffered himself to be betrayed into the disgraceful deed of attacking a vessel of such inferior force—so much so that *she scarcely exceeded in length the space between the President's bows and her gangway ladder, and her topmasts heads ranged very little higher than the Frigate's lower yard arms.*

The officers of the United States ship endeavored to shield themselves under the plea that they thought her to be a Frigate of 36 or 38 guns, although Capt. Ludlow could see that her gaff was down and her main top-sail yard on the cap. It is evident Commodore Rodgers and his officers wished for a fight and had it. As to the question of who fired first—the shot came from the President—and was accidentally discharged.

It should be remembered that the Sloop belonged to a nation at War, was in pursuit of her regular vocation and therefore always prepared to go into action at the shortest notice—the Frigate was subject to no such contingency belonging to a neutral nation—consequently it was a strange thing to find her cleared for action—men at quarters—guns shotted—and ports open—what followed came as a matter of course, and any credit in the affair is due to the Sloop and her gallant crew, especially when her dimensions and tonnage are taken into consideration—her length between perpendiculars was 110 feet—beam 27 feet, 429 tons burthen. The tonnage and dimensions of the President have been given in the first number of this review. Capt. Bingham was deservedly promoted to post-rank.

That there was no occasion for congratulation on the account of this action by the people of the United States is certain, neither can the subjects of the British Empire assume that they were wholly unblameable in the matter. Antiquated and impracticable assumptions, illegal and impolitic actions stirred the pride of the one people and involved the other in a contest at a moment when it was most desirable to avoid it. Nations can no more afford to be quarrelsome than individuals, and if the Naval supremacy of Great Britain has been questioned it was by her descendants; at the same time it is but justice to observe that this has been done with such a boastful and untruthful spirit as to warrant the assertion that the contact of the people of the United States with the French during their successful rebellion, inoculated them largely with the old gasconading spirit without its gallantry—hence all the contemporary historians exhibit the unseemly spectacle of partisans, without a spark of chivalrous feeling, or the desire to place the cause of events on a true footing.

That the United States were no match for the British Empire during the contest of 1819-14 is so self evident an axiom that it is not necessary to illustrate the affirmation

thereof—the latter with 1100 war vessels afloat could only look on the former as beneath their notice, whose whole Navy could not number 40 sail, without a military force or any thing like an organisation on which reliance could be placed, it certainly evidences no ordinary pluck on the part of the people and Government of the United States to provoke a contest in which they were so fearfully over-matched, or, accepting the alternative, it argues great stupidity on the part of their Government—it is possible that the latter combined with ambition was the true cause of those extraordinary demonstrations which eventually culminated in War.

When England accepted the contest with all Europe it would certainly have been wisdom on her part either to have engaged the United States as an ally or treated her as an enemy—in the former case the duration of the war would have been considerably shortened, and in the latter it could not have been prolonged—the worst possible policy was followed—the States were allowed to remain neutral on their own terms, and as a natural consequence became the carriers of the adversaries of Great Britain, and thus enabled them to prolong the war indefinitely. The contest of 1812-14 had more than its full share in closing the European war by cutting off the supplies of the power at variance with Great Britain.

On the 14th April, 1812, Congress in a secret sitting passed an act laying an embargo on all ships and vessels of the United States for ninety days, this was to avoid the consequence of declaring war against Great Britain. During the month of May many of the fastest of these vessels were even converted into Privateers, and an act of Congress of the 18th June declared "the actual existence of War between the United Kingdom of England and Ireland and the United States of America."

On the 21st June Commodore Rodgers with the President and United States Frigates, the 18 pounder 36 gun Frigate *Congress*, 18 gun Ship-sloop *Hornet*, and 16 gun Brig-sloop *Argus*, sailed from New York for the purpose of intercepting the homeward bound Jamaica fleet, consisting of 100 sail. known to be not far from the coast, under the convoy of the British 18 pounder 36 gun Frigate *Thalia*, Capt. J. G. Vashon, and 18 gun Brig-sloop *Reindeer*. This fleet had sailed from Negril-bay, Jamaica, on the 20th May, under the additional convoy, as far as Cape Antonia, of the 64 gun ship *Polyphe-mas*, and had passed Havana on the 4th June. On the 23rd, at 3 a.m., Commodore Rodgers spoke an American brig bound from Madeira to New York, and was informed by him that four days before in latitude 36° longitude 67° she had passed the Jamaica fleet steering to the Eastward; he immediately bore away with the intention of intercepting them.

At 6 a.m., Nantucket shoals being North-