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## HISTORY OF THE WAR BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. DURING THE YEARS 1812, 1813, AND 1814.

### CHAPTER V.

The failure of all the military movements undertaken, so far, by the Americans was, in some degree, balanced by the unexpected success which attended their operations on an element which had long been the scene of triumph to their opponents—we may advisedly use the expression 'secne,' as the sea had hitherto been the stage on which the triumphs of British prowess had been most brilliantly represented. In entering, however, on a contest with American sailors, bone of their bone and sinew of their sinew, the British Government appear to have lost sight of the fact, that the strength of the United States navy consisted of a few frigates, of scantling and armament corresponding to their own seventy-fours, and that, by their own well understood regulations, every single-decked vessel was bound to engage any single-decked vessel of the enemy, nominally of her own class, however superior, in reality, in tonnage, guns and crew;—another important fact also, must not be lost sight of, that the American vessels were manned by sailors, many of whom, unfortunately, were British, while many more had been trained in the British service. For many years previous to the declaration of war, America had been decoying men from British vessels by every artful scheme, so that the captains of American vessels had to pick their complement not only

from amongst men of their own nation, but from a numerous body also of foreign seamen. The constitution also of the body of American marines was wholly different from the British.

In the United States every man may learn to shoot, every man may be a marksman. To collect these expert marksmen officers were sent into the western parts of the Union, and to complete still farther their efficiency, a marine barrack was established near Washington, from which depôt the American ships were regularly supplied. There was another point in which the British were found, as compared with their opponents, very deficient—gunnery,—nor was this entirely the fault of the commanders of H. M. ships, as the Admiralty instructions, which they were bound to obey, restricted them, during the first six months after the ship received her armament, from expending more shots per month\* than amounted to one-third in number of her upper-deck guns, and after these six months had elapsed, they were to use only half the quantity. The disastrous consequences of this discouragement of the expenditure of powder and shot will be apparent, as we shall have to bring forward in quick succession, instances that will show how much the British navy suffered by inattention to this most essential point in war, the proper handling of the weapons by which it was to be waged.

We have boldly made the assertion that the American frigates were of the scantling of seventy-fours, and a few explanatory remarks will show the correctness of the statement.

\* Vide James' Naval History, part 8.