

Sir C. Hardy with the British fleet, who had also been blown off the coast, regained his station on the last day of August, in full view of the enemy, whom he vainly endeavored by manœuvres to entice into a position where their great superiority of force would not avail much. They followed or chased him as far as Plymouth and immediately afterwards bore away for Brest, ostensibly because their crews were sickly, but in reality because they had 8,000 landsmen on board rated as seamen; so that if Sir Chas. Hardy had had a little fighting in him it is probable he would have punished Count d'Orvilliers for his temerity, and materially aided his country by adding to her prestige, which had suffered considerably at his hands. A sea fight of any kind would have disabled the combined fleets, who would be less able to effect a landing on British soil afterwards and would have prevented an "armed neutrality" of the maritime powers, whose object was to destroy British supremacy at sea.

The combined fleet inflicted no material injury on British commerce, the West Indian fleet of 125 sail having entered the channel before it appeared off Plymouth, and scarcely had it bore away for Brest when the East India fleet arrived. But if the higher officers of the British navy were insensible to their country's honor or interests and did not possess the energy or ability necessary for the discharge of their duties, amongst the captains and subordinates were men worthy the highest days of Britain's naval glories to be found.

The Baltic fleet under the convoy of the Serapis, 44 guns, Captain Richard Pearson, and the Countess of Scarborough, Captain Thos. Percy, was attacked off Flamborough head on the 25th of September by an American squadron, consisting of the Bon Homme Richard, of 38 guns, Captain Paul Jones; the Alliance, 36 guns, Captain Pierre Landais; Pallas, 32 guns, Captain Nicolas Cottenican; Vengeance, 14 guns, Captain Philip N. Kivot, and Cerf, 14 gun cutter, Captain Joseph Varage. Although ostensibly under the American flag and nominally under the commission of Congress the orders of the French Government and its Minister of Marine were to be carried out. Before quitting L'Orient the whole of the above named officers signed an agreement giving to each an independent authority. The Baltic fleet having run into Scarborough the Serapis and her consort stood for the hostile squadron, which at 4 p.m. was seen from the dock bearing down with a light breeze from the southward and westward. At 6 p.m. both ships having closed, tacked with their heads in shore, the better to cover the retreat of the convoy, both ships on the larboard tack, and the Countess of Scarborough headmost. The enemy's force was distinctly seen to be a two-decked ship and two frigates, but from their being end on no colors were visible. At 7:00 p.m., the two-decked ship brought to on the larboard bow of the Sera-

pis within musket shot, when Captain Pearson's hailed her with "What ship is that?" the answer was "The Princess Royal." Captain Pearson then asked from whence they came, to which an evasive answer was returned, and in reply they were told he would fire into them if not answered at once, a gun was then fired from the stranger, which was the Bon Homme Richard, and answered by a broadside from the Serapis, on which the action commenced. Both ships being under top sails and top gallant sails. After several broadsides were exchanged the Richard hove all aback and dropped on the quarter of the Serapis. In accounting for this manœuvre Captain Jones and his Lieutenant, Mr. Dale, states that at the second broadside two of the six guns that were in the gun room of the Bon Homme Richard burst, blowing up the deck above and killing or wounding a large proportion of the people below, and this disaster caused all the heavy guns to be deserted. But the real facts were that the heavy and well directed broadsides from the main deck of the Serapis had driven the men from their guns and this manœuvre was intended to rake the Serapis by bringing up under her stern, but frustrated by her quickness in wearing, on which the Richard filled and ran aboard on the weather or larboard quarter, making an attempt to board which was at once repulsed when the Richard again dropped astern, whereupon the yards of the Serapis were backed to enable her to get alongside of her antagonist but having gathered too much sternway the Richard was able to fill and stand across her bows, but the mizen shrouds of the latter catching the jib-boom of the Serapis the ships dropped alongside each other head and stem. On the spar giving way the spare anchor of the Serapis hooking the weather quarter of the Richard at 8:30 p.m., when a furious action commenced, the muzzles of the guns actually touching. From this time till 10:30 the action continued without interruption; the 12-pounder 36 gun frigate Alliance bore down on the vessels after they got foul and sailing around them poured in a galling fire to which no return could be made by the Serapis. About an hour after the close action commenced all the lower deck battery of the Serapis from the main mast aft was rendered useless by a destructive explosion of cartridges, and at 10:30 p.m. the Alliance having taken up a position under her stern raking her decks with impunity, most of the officers and two-thirds of his crew killed and wounded, Captain Pearson ordered the colors to be struck at the same moment the main mast fell over the side. His duty had been performed, the convoy had escaped.

The Countess of Scarborough maintained a close action for some time with the Pallas but was eventually obliged to surrender to superior force with a loss of four killed and twenty wounded.

The result of this action, if simply between

the Serapis and Bon Homme Richard would have been speedily determined. The description of the latter by her Lieutenant, Mr. Dale, is conclusive on that point, he says that "Aboard, on a line with the guns of the Serapis that had not been disabled by the explosion, the timbers were found to be nearly all beaten in or beaten out, for in this respect there was little difference between the two sides of the ship, and it was said her poop and upper decks would have fallen into the gun-room but for a few futtocks that had been missed. Indeed, so large was the vacuum that the most of the shot fired from this part of the Serapis must have gone through the Richard without touching anything. The rudder was cut from the stern-post and the transoms nearly all driven out of her. All the after part of the ship, in particular that which was below the quarter deck, was torn to pieces, and nothing had saved those stationed there but the impossibility of elevating guns that almost touched their object." The Richard had 307 men killed and wounded.

The Bon Homme Richard had been an old French Indiaman known as the Daras, built like all vessels of her class with high and narrow poop and roomy "tween decks;" her measurement was 946 tons. The Serapis was 886 tons, having 20 long 18-pounders on her lower deck, 22 long 12-pounders on her main deck and two long 12-pounders on the fore-castle,—total, 44 guns. The space between decks was so low that great difficulty was experienced in working the guns, and on the lower deck they were so long and unwieldy as to prevent their being easily run in. The upper deck having only a light breast high bulwark. The Richard sank before all her wounded could be removed. Captain Pearson was deservedly knighted and Captain Percy promoted.

This was undoubtedly the most gallant action of the war, reflecting the highest credit for courage and endurance on all concerned.

DECLINE OF AMERICAN COMMERCE.—The New York Chamber of Commerce, after a lengthy debate on Thursday, adopted the report and resolutions of the majority of the committee on the decline of American commerce, submitted two weeks ago, which recommends to Congress to modify the laws so that foreign built steamers be imported free of duty, and be privileged to carry the American flag, provided they are American owned, and not to be employed in our coastwise trade; that iron plates and such other material for the construction of steamers as may be deemed advisable, be admitted free of duty; and that all ship stores procurable in bond, drawback be returned as upon goods shipped for sale to foreign lands, and that ample subsidies be granted to lines of steamers built in American yards, to the end that a competition with powerful foreign organizations may be successfully inaugurated and sustained.

A squad of the 63th Rifles tested the "Martin-Henry" rifle to day, 14th Jan.