

a contest with me on nearly equal terms, and from his extreme prudence in keeping both his ships ever after constantly within hail of each other, there were no hopes of any advantage to my country from a longer stay in port. I therefore determined to put to sea the first opportunity which should offer; and I was the more strongly induced to do so, as I had gained certain intelligence that the *Tagus*, rating 38, and two other frigates, had sailed for that sea in pursuit of me; and I had reason to expect the arrival of the *Racoon* from the N. W. coast of America, where she had been sent for the purpose of destroying our fur establishment on the Columbia. A rendezvous was appointed for the *Essex* Junior, and every arrangement made for sailing, and I intended to let them chase me off, to give the *Essex* Junior an opportunity of escaping. On the 28th of March, the day after this determination was formed, the wind came on to blow fresh from the southward, when I parted my larboard cable and dragged my starboard anchor directly out to sea. Not a moment was to be lost in getting sail on the ship. The enemy were close in with the point forming the west side of the bay; but on opening them, I saw a prospect of passing to windward, when I took in my top-gallant sails, which were set over single reefed top-sails and braced up for this purpose, but on rounding the point, a heavy squall struck the ship and carried away her maintopmast, precipitating the men who were aloft into the sea, who were drowned. Both ships now gave chase to me, and I endeavoured, in my disabled state, to regain the port; but finding I could not recover the common anchorage, I ran close into a small bay, about three quarters of a mile to the leeward of the battery on the east side of the harbor, and let go my anchor within pistol shot of the shore, where I intended to repair my damages as soon as possible. The enemy continued to approach, and showed an evident intention of attacking, regardless of the neutrality of the place where I was anchored; and the caution observed in their approach to the attack of the crippled *Essex* was truly ridiculous, as was their display of the motto flags, and the number of Jacks at all their mast heads. I, with as much expedition as circumstances would admit of, got my ship ready for action and endeavored to get a spring on my cable, but had not succeeded when the enemy at 54 minutes after 3 P. M. made his attack, the *Phebe* placing herself under my stern, and the *Cherub* on my starboard bow; but the *Cherub* soon finding her situation a hot one, bore up and ran under my stern also, where both ships kept up a hot raking fire. I had got three long 12 pounders out of the stern ports, which were worked with so much bravery and skill that in half an hour we so disabled both as to compel them to haul off to repair damages. In the course of this firing, I had by the great exertion of Mr. Edward Barnwell, the acting sailing master, assisted by Mr. Linscott, the boatswain, succeeded in getting springs on our cable three different times; but the fire of the enemy was so excessive that before we could get our broad side to bear, they were shot away, and thus rendered useless to us. My ship had received many injuries and several had been killed & wounded; but my brave officers and men, notwithstanding the unfavourable circumstances under which we were brought to action, and the powerful force opposed to us, were no ways discouraged—all appeared determined to defend their ship to the last extremity, and to die in preference to a shameful surrender. Our gaff, with the ensign and the motto flag at the mizen, had been shot away, but FREE TRADE AND SAILORS' RIGHTS continued to fly at the fore. Our ensign was replaced by another, and to guard against a similar event, an ensign was made fast in the mizen rigging, and several Jacks were hoisted in different parts of the ship. The enemy soon repaired his damages for a fresh attack; he now placed himself with both his ships, on my starboard quarter out of the reach of my carronades, and when my stern guns could not be brought to bear, he there kept up a most galling fire, which was out of my power to return, when I saw no prospect of injuring him without getting under way and becoming the assailant. My top-sails sheets and halliards were all shot away, as well as the jib and fore-top-mast-stay sail halliards. The only rope not cut was the flying-jib halliards; and that

being the only sail I could set, I caused it to be hoisted, my cable to be cut, and ran down on both ships, with an intention of laying the *Phebe* on board.

The firing on both sides was now tremendous. I had let fall my fore-top-sail and foresail, but the want of the tacks and sheets rendered them almost useless to us; yet we were enabled for a short time to close with the enemy; & altho' our decks were now strewn with dead, and our cockpit filled with wounded—although our ship had been several times on fire, and was rendered a perfect wreck, we were still encouraged to hope to save her, from the circumstance of the *Cherub*, from her crippled state, being compelled to haul off. She did not return to close action again, although she apparently had it in her power to do so, but kept up a distant firing with her long guns. The *Phebe*, from our disabled state, was enabled however, by edging off, to choose the distance which best suited her long guns, and kept up a tremendous fire on us, which mowed down my brave companions by the dozen. Many of my guns had been rendered useless by the enemy's shot, and many of them had their whole crews destroyed; we manned them again from those which were disabled, and one gun in particular was three times manned—fifteen men were slain at it in the course of the action! but strange as it may appear, the captain of it escaped with only a slight wound. Finding that the enemy had it in his power to choose his distance, I now gave up all hope of closing with him, and, as the wind, for the moment, seemed to favour the design, I determined to endeavour to run her on shore, land my men and destroy her. Every thing seemed to favour my wishes. We had approached the shore within musket shot, and I had no doubt of succeeding, when in an instant the wind shifted from the land (as is very common in this port in the latter part of the day) and paid our head down on the *Phebe*, where we were again exposed to a dreadful raking fire. My ship was now totally unmanageable; yet as her head was towards the enemy, and he to the leeward of me, I still hoped to be able to board him. At this moment Lt. Com. Downes, came on board to receive my orders, under the impression that I should soon be a prisoner. He could be of no use in the then wretched state of the *Essex*; and hnding (from the enemy's putting his helm up) that my last attempt at boarding would not succeed, I directed him after he had been about 10 minutes on board, to return to his own ship, to be prepared for defending and destroying her in case of attack. He took with him several of my wounded, leaving three of his boat's crew on board to make room for them. The *Cherub* now had an opportunity of distinguishing herself, by keeping up a hot fire on him during his return. The slaughter on board my ship had now become horrible, the enemy continued to rake us, and we were unable to bring a gun to bear. I therefore directed a hawser to be bent to the sheet anchor, and the anchor to be cut from the bows to bring her head round; this succeeded. We again got our broadside to bear, and as the enemy was much crippled and unable to hold his own, I have no doubt he would soon have drifted out of gun-shot before he discovered we had anchored, had not the hawser unfortunately parted. My ship had taken fire several times during the action, but alarmingly so forward and aft at this moment, the flames were bursting up each hatchway, and no hopes were entertained of saving her; our distance from the shore did not exceed three quarters of a mile, and I hoped many of my brave crew would be able to save themselves, should the ship blow up, as I was informed the fire was near the magazine, and the explosion of a large quantity of powder below served to increase the horrors of our situation—our boats were destroyed by the enemy's shot; I, therefore, directed those who could swim to jump overboard, and endeavour to gain the shore. Some reached it; some were taken by the enemy; and some perished in the attempt; but most preferred sharing with me the fate of the ship. We, who remained, now turned our attention wholly to extinguishing the flames; and when we had succeeded went again to our guns, where the firing was kept up for some minutes, but the crew had by this time become so weakened, that they all declared to me the impossibility of making further resistance, and entreated me

to surrender my ship to save the wounded, as all further attempt at opposition must prove ineffectual, almost every gun being disabled by the destruction of their crews. I now sent for the officers of divisions to consult them; but what was my surprise, to find only acting Lt. Stephen Decatur McKnight, remaining, (who confirmed the report respecting the condition of the guns on the gun-deck—those on the spar-deck were not in a better state.) Lieut. Wilmer, after fighting most gallantly throughout the action, had been knocked overboard by a splinter while getting the sheet anchor from the bows, and was drowned. Acting Lt. John G. Cowell had lost a leg, Mr. Edward Barnwell, acting sailing-master, had been carried below after receiving two severe wounds, one in the breast and one in the face; and acting Lt. Wm. H. Odenheimer, had been knocked overboard from the quarter an instant before, and did not regain the ship until after the surrender. I was informed that the cockpit, the steerage, the ward-room and the birth-deck could contain no more wounded; that the wounded were killed while the surgeons were dressing them, and that unless something was speedily done to prevent it, the ship would sink from the number of shot holes in her bottom. And on sending for the carpenter, he informed me that all his crew had been killed or wounded, and that he had once been over the side to stop the leaks, when his slings had been shot away, and it was with difficulty he was saved from drowning. The enemy from the smoothness of the water, and the impossibility of our reaching him with our carronades, and the little apprehension that was excited by our fire which had now become much slackened, was enabled to take aim at us as at a target; his shot never missed our hull, and my ship was cut up in a manner which was, perhaps, never before witnessed—in fine, I saw no hopes of saving her, and at 20 ms. after 6 P. M. gave the painful order to strike the colours. 75 men, including officers, were all that remained of my whole crew, of which the action, capable of doing duty, and many of them severely wounded, some of whom have since died. The enemy, still continued his fire, and my brave though unfortunate companions were still falling about me. I directed an opposite gun to be fired, to shew them that we intended no further resistance; but they did not desist; four men were killed at my side, and others in different parts of the ship. I now believed he intended to shew us no quarter, and that it would be as well to die with my flag flying as struck, and was on the point of again hoisting it, when about ten minutes after hauling the colours down he ceased firing. I cannot speak in sufficiently high terms of the conduct of those engaged for such an unparalleled length of time (under such circumstances) with me in the arduous & unequal contest. Let it suffice to say, that more bravery, skill, patriotism and zeal, were never displayed on any occasion. Every one seemed determined to die in defence of their much loved country's cause, and nothing but views to humanity could ever have reconciled them to the surrender of the ship; they remembered their wounded & helpless shipmates below. To acting Lt. McKnight and Odenheimer, I feel much indebted for their great exertions & bravery throughout the action in fighting and encouraging the men at their divisions, for the dextrous management of the long guns, and for their promptness in remaining their guns as their crews were slaughtered. The conduct of that brave and heroic officer, acting Lt. John G. Cowell, who lost his leg in the latter part of the action, excited the admiration of every man in the ship, and after being wounded would not consent to be taken below till loss of blood rendered him insensible. Mr. Edward Barnwell, acting sailing master, whose activity and courage was equally conspicuous, returned on deck after his first wound, and remained after receiving his second until fainting with loss of blood. Mr. Samuel B. Johnson who had joined me the day before, and acted as marine officer, conducted himself with great bravery, and exerted himself in assisting at the long guns, the musquetry after the first half-hour being useless from our long distance.

M. W. Bostwick whom I appointed acting purser of the *Essex* Junior, and who was on board my ship, did the duties of

him the highest honour, and his shipmates Isaac, Farragut and Odenheimer, as well as acting midshipman James Terry, James R. Lyman, and Samuel Dusenbury, and Master's Mate William Pierce, exerted themselves in the performance of their respective duties and gave an earnest of their value to the service; the three first are too young to recommend for promotion, the latter I beg leave to recommend for confirmation as well as the acting lieutenants, and Messieurs Barnwell, Johnson and Bostwick.

We have been unfortunate, but not disgraced—The defence of the *Essex* has not been less honourable to her officers and crew, than the capture of an equal force, and I now consider my situation less unpleasant, than that of Com. Hillyar, who, in violation of every principle of honour and generosity, and regardless of the rights of nations, attacked the *Essex* in her crippled state, within pistol shot of a neutral shore; when, for six weeks I had daily offered him fair and honourable combat, on terms greatly to his advantage; the blood of the slain must be on his head, and he has yet to reconcile his conduct to heaven, to his conscience and to the world. The annexed extract of a letter from Com. Hillyar, which was written previous to his returning me my sword, will show his opinion of our conduct.

My loss has been dreadfully severe, 58 killed or have since died of their wounds, and among them Lt. Cowell; 39 were severely wounded, 27 slightly, and 31 are missing; making in all 154, killed, wounded and missing, a list of whose names is annexed. The professional knowledge of Dr. Richard Hoffman, acting surgeon, and Dr. Alexander Montgomery, acting surgeon's mate, added to their assiduity and the benevolent attentions and assistance of Mr. D. P. Adams, the Chaplain, saved the lives of many of the wounded; those gentlemen have been indefatigable in their attentions to them; the two first I beg leave to recommend for confirmation, and the latter to the notice of the department.

I must in justification of myself observe, that with our six twelve pounders only we fought this action, our carronades being almost useless. The loss in killed and wounded has been great with the enemy; among the former is the first Lieut. Cap. Tucker of the *Cherub*, whose wounds are severe. Both the *Essex* and *Phebe* were in a sinking state, and it was with difficulty they could be kept afloat until they anchored in Valparaiso next morning. The battered state of the *Essex* will, I believe, prevent her ever reaching England, and I also think it will be out of their power to repair the damages of the *Phebe*, so as to enable her to double Cape Horn. All the masts and yards of the *Phebe* and *Cherub* are badly crippled, and their hulls much cut up; the former had 18 twelve pound shot through her below her water line, some three feet under water. Nothing but the smoothness of the water saved both the *Phebe* and *Essex*.

I hope, sir, that our conduct may prove satisfactory to our country, and that it will testify it by obtaining our speedy exchange, that we may again have it in our power to prove our zeal.

Com. Hillyar, (I am informed) has thought proper to state to his government that the action only lasted 45 minutes; should he have done so, the motive may be easily discovered—but the thousands of disinterested witnesses who covered the surrounding hills can testify that we fought his ships near 2 hours & a half; upwards of fifty broadsides were fired by the enemy agreeably to their own accounts, & upwards of seventy-five by ours; except the few minutes they were repairing damages, the firing was incessant.

Soon after my capture I entered into an agreement with Com. Hillyar to disarm my prize the *Essex* Junior, and proceed with the survivors of my officers and crew in her to the U. S. taking with me all her officers and crew. He consented to grant me a passport to secure her from recapture. The ship was small, and we knew we had much to suffer, yet we hoped soon to reach our country in safety, that we might again have it in our power to serve it. This arrangement was attended with no additional expense, as she was abundantly supplied with provisions and stores for the voyage.

In justice to Com. Hillyar, I must observe, that (although I can never be reconciled to the manner of his

attack on the *Essex*, or to his conduct before the action, he has since his capture, shewn the greatest humanity to my wounded (whom he permitted me to land on condition that the U. S. should bear their expatriation,) and has endeavoured as much as lay in his power to alleviate the distresses of war, by the most generous and delicate deportment towards myself, and officers and crew; he gave orders that the property of every person should be respected—his orders; however well not so strictly attended to as might have been expected; besides being deprived of books, charts, &c. &c. both myself and officers lost many articles of our clothing, some of considerable amount. I should not have considered this last circumstance of sufficient importance to notice, did it not mark a striking difference between the navy of G. Britain and that of the U. States, highly creditable to the latter.

By the arrival of the *Tagus*, a few days after my capture, I was informed that besides the ships which had arrived in the Pacific in pursuit of me, and those still expected, others were sent to cruise for me in the China seas, off New Zealand, Timor and New-Holland, and that another frigate was sent to the River la Plata.

To possess the *Essex* it has cost the British Government near six millions of dollars, and yet, since her capture was owing entirely to accident; and if we consider the expedition with which naval contests are now decided, the action is a dishonor to them. Had they brought their ships boldly into action with a force so very superior, and having the choice of position, they should either have captured or destroyed us in one fourth the time they were about it.

During the action, our Consul Mr. Poinsett called on the Governor of Valparaiso, and requested that the batteries might protect the *Essex*. This request was refused, but he promised that if she should succeed in fighting her way to the common anchorage, he would send an officer to the British command, and request him to cease firing, but declined using force under any circumstances, & there is no doubt of a perfect understanding existing between them; this conduct added to the assistance given to the British, and their friendly reception after the action, and the strong bias of the faction which govern Chili in favor of the English, as well as their hostility to the Americans, induced Mr. Poinsett to leave that country. Under such circumstances, I did not conceive it would be proper for me to claim the restoration of my ship, confident that the claim would be made by my Government to more effect. Finding some difficulty in the sale of my prizes, I had taken the *Heclor* and *Catharine* to sea and burnt them and their cargoes.

I exchanged Lt. McKnight, Mr. Adams, and Mr. Lyman, and eleven seamen, for part of the crew of the *Sir Andrew Hammond*, and sailed from Valparaiso on the 27th April, where the enemy were still patching up their ships to put them in a state for proceeding to Rio de Janeiro previous to going to England.

Annexed is a list of the remains of my crew to be exchanged, as also a copy of the correspondence between Com. Hillyar and myself on that subject. I also send you a list of the prisoners I have taken during my cruise, amounting to 343.

I have the honor to be, &c.
D. PORTER.
The Hon. Secretary of the Navy of the U. S. Washington.

P. S. To give you a correct idea of the state of the *Essex* at the time of her surrender, I send you the boatswain's and Carpenter's report of the damages; I also send you a report of the divisions.

(The documents accompanying this letter shall appear in our next.)

WASHINGTON CITY, July 15.
A BRILLIANT VICTORY.
Copy of a letter from Major General Brown to the Secretary of War, dated 6th July, 1814, Chippeway Plains.

SIR,
Excuse my silence. I have been much engaged. Fort Erie did not, as I assured you it should not, detain me a single day. At 10 o'clock on the night of the 4th, I arrived here with the reserve, Gen. Scott having taken the position about noon with the van. My arrangements for turning and taken in the rear the enemy's position east of Chippeway, was made, when Maj General Reilly, suspecting our intention, & adhering to the rule, that it is better to give

than to receive an attack, came from behind his works about 5 o'clock in the afternoon of the 5th, in order of battle. We did not haul him before 6 o'clock his line was broken and his forces defeated, leaving on the field four hundred killed and wounded. He was closely pressed, and would have been utterly ruined, but for the proximity of his works, which he fled for shelter. The wounded of the enemy and those of our own army must be attended to. They will be removed to Buffalo. This, with my limited means of transportation, will take a day or two, after which I shall advance, not doubting that the gallant and accomplished troops I led, will break down all opposition between me and Lake Ontario, when if met by the fleet, all is well—if not, under the favor of heaven, we shall behave in a way to avoid disgrace. My detailed report shall be made in a day or two.

I am, with the highest respect, &c.
JACOB BROWN.
Hon. Secretary of War.

Copy of a letter from Capt. Dent to the Secy of the Navy, dated Charleston, 8th July, 1814.

SIR,
I have the honor to forward Lieut. Besset's letter, detailing the particulars of the melancholy disaster of the *Alligator*. Private letters from that quarter represent the whirlwind as very severe and destructive to houses, crops, &c.

Midshipmen Brailsford and Rogerson were most promising young officers, and would have done honor to their profession. I have taken the necessary steps to get up the *Alligator*, and have no doubt, but I shall succeed.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, your obedient servant,
J. H. DENT.

Copy of a letter from Lieut. Besset to John H. Dent, Esq. commanding naval officer, Charleston, S. Carolina.

St. Helena Island, July 26, 1814.

SIR—The painful task of informing you the particulars of the loss of the U. States schooner *Alligator*, I am now able to undertake. On the 1st of July, at 3 P. M. while at anchor in the Port Royal Sound, with lower yards down, and top gallant masts hoisted, a heavy dark cloud rose in the west, and coming rapidly by us. The squall within about half a mile had the appearance of a water spout or whirlwind; supposing from its appearance it would upset or destroy us, I thought the only way to save the vessel would be to run her on shore, as it was first quarter flood; the table was cut and the head of the jib hoisted; when before the wind she was struck by a most tremendous blast, but no injury was done; it then cleared up, the small bower was let go and the vessel brought up. In ten minutes she was struck by another still more violent gust and instantly upset; the cable was again cut in hopes that she would drive on shore, but all to no purpose; she sunk in four fathoms water; some of the men attempted to gain the shore by swimming, but dreadful to relate, only four succeeded; twenty-three were drowned. Among the number I have to lament the loss of two promising young officers, Midshipmen Brailsford & Rogerson. 19 have been killed & interred in this Island. Messrs Brailsford & Rogerson were interred in the church yard by the gentlemen of St. Helena. Annexed is a list of the names of those who have been found and those who are still missing. I have the honor to be, &c.
R. BESSETT.

Twelve including myself were saved on the head of the topmast.

(Here follows a list of those drowned and saved—23 of the former, 19 of the latter.)

NORFOLK, July 12.

A flag of truce which was sent down to the *Dragon* 74, with stores for Mr. Swerchhoff (who on board that ship) returned last evening. From the officer who was in the flag we learn that two 74's and a brig additional, had arrived in the bay, and that the *Dragon* would shortly go to Bermuda & Halifax for repairs. Capt. Barr said he expected that Sir Thomas Picton, with 12,000 men would be in the Chesapeake before long. Capt. B. probably founds this expectation upon the statements in the English papers.

From a person who is just up from the Bay shore, we learn, that having at 11 o'clock down there were four 74's and 2 frigates in the bay