

NAVAL HISTORY OF THE REVOLUTION.

BY EDWARD E. HALE.

THE naval history of the American Revolution has hardly attracted the attention it seems to deserve.

It is not difficult to account for such inattention. Movements on land are connected together, and a certain dramatic unity can be made out, from the study of them or the description of them. But, in the Revolution, those naval conflicts in which two or three vessels only were engaged were much more important in the aggregate than the few battles of great fleets. America, indeed, had no great fleets. Her sea victories, which were many, and her losses, which were many, were generally the results of separate encounters.

Now, when the number of such encounters is several hundred in a year, the most painstaking annalist may be excused if he devotes little time or attention to those of less importance, and, indeed, if he dismisses the year's work by some single sweeping statement. In fact, we have the authority of Almon's Remembrancer for saying that, in the year 1777, 467 vessels of the English commercial fleet were captured. Probably the English captures of American merchantmen were not so many. But the Americans had still a large commercial marine in that year. The English took several of our vessels of war, and we took some of theirs. I name this year because it precedes the declaration of war by France. It is then probable that seven or eight hundred captures were made by one side or another, about two a day. If that is a fair average, from which to estimate

the encounters at sea, seven years of war must have given about five thousand such encounters. It is a matter of course that history shall make no record of the greater part of them. Indeed, our leading histories are satisfied when they tell the story of the privateering exploits of the beginning, of the attack on Bermuda and the Bahamas, two or three of Paul Jones's most picturesque exploits, and the experiences of the fleets of the Count de Grasse and of D'Estaing. This is not unnatural. But it is, after all, perpetual dropping which wears away the stone, and a careful estimate of the public opinion of England, will probably show that the loss, in seven years, of nearly three thousand vessels from the merchant marine of England had more to do with the absolute change of public opinion in England between 1775 and 1781 than any other special cause which can be named. The merchants did not like to pay insurance ranging from forty per cent. in a year, even to sixty per cent. sometimes; and a nation of shopkeepers, which would not have grumbled much under the taxes which Lord North's government imposed, became restive and recalcitrant under the terrible checks inflicted on their foreign trade. Of one year it is said that only forty vessels escaped out of the four hundred in the African trade. Of the same year, it is said that nearly half of the fleet which traded directly between Ireland and the West Indies was taken. Abraham Whipple, in one vessel, took ten West Indianmen out of a fleet which did not number fifty in all.

It is the privilege of the gentleman who prepares the Council report that he may ask such questions or suggest such inquiries as seem of interest to him in his own line of study. In the few minutes in which I shall detain the society, I do not make any attempt to tell the story of the naval experiences of the Revolution. I have hoped, however, that I might call the attention of gentlemen interested in such studies to the need of a larger and fuller review of the subject than has been made, particularly by speaking of

some of the manuscript sources of information which we have now at hand, many of which have not been used, I think, by Cooper and the other writers on the subject.

I do not, however, wish to speak, except in language of high praise, of the work which has already been done. In the admirable monograph by our associate, Mr. Winsor, on the literature of the subject, will be found what I suppose to be a full list of printed books bearing upon it, which must be studied carefully for any proper work upon it, and of many manuscripts, to which I need not otherwise refer. The leading American works are Thomas Clark's "Naval History," Charles Goldsborough's "Naval Chronicle," James Fennimore Cooper's admirable "Naval History of the United States," and G. F. Emmons's "Navy of the United States." Besides these, of course, there are to be remembered the biographies, only too few, however, of our great naval commanders. It could be wished that the descendants or relatives of these great men would take more pains than they have yet taken, to draw out from the obscurity of private papers, memoranda which are now of great importance for the philosophical study of history.

The attention of the society was called to this subject, by our president, Senator Hoar, in the valuable paper which he read here six years ago. With his usual success, he had discovered, what the rest of us searched for in vain, a list of one hundred and twenty-nine cases of prize appeals during the war of the Revolution, whose records are now in the office of the clerk of the Supreme Court of the United States. "These records," he says, "contain, in many instances, the original letters of marque in case of the capture of a privateer, and such evidence as to the character and conduct of the captured vessel and the circumstances of the voyage, as was necessary to determine whether she was lawful prize. This is often quite full and minute, and of much interest."¹

¹ Mr. J. C. Bancroft Davis has published a full account of this interesting record and of the Admiralty Court which kept it, since this report was read.

I had myself made fruitless search for records of many of these cases in the archives of the United States courts in several districts. It is however probable that much valuable matter, relating to cases where no appeal was taken, may yet be found at Portsmouth, Salem, even Boston, Providence, New London, and perhaps there are such records in Charleston. It will by no means follow that, because such papers are not where they ought to be, they do not exist.

It is, indeed, a rather curious fact that the Navy Department has not one word of the history of the navy of the Revolutionary War, or thinks it has not. Neither has the War Department, although at one time the navy department was carried on by the Secretary of War. The State Department has the volume of original records of the Committee of Marine of the Continental Congress. It does not appear that this important volume was used by Cooper. It was of this committee that John Adams said that he enjoyed his connection with it more than he had enjoyed any public service that he had rendered. Indeed, it is interesting to observe John Adams's interest in the navy from the very beginning, and some of the most picturesque and dramatic little turns in its early history have been recorded by him.

The District Court at Philadelphia has a very meagre memorandum relative to the condemnation of prizes taken during the Revolutionary War. The clerk of that court is quite confident that the State of Pennsylvania did not issue privateer commissions, leaving that business to the Continental Committee, which was in session at Philadelphia. This will hardly account, however, for the absence of an Admiralty report of proceedings, taken when prizes were brought into port, and it is to be hoped that such a record may still be found in the archives of that State.

Under the persistent and vigorous lead of John Adams, the Continental Congress early gave itself to the business of building up a navy. It bought vessels, and it built

them. In particular, it ordered thirteen vessels at one time, which were to be most of them of the largest class of frigates then built. The names of these vessels were suggestive of some point in the history of each of the thirteen colonies. It is to be wished that, in the restoration of our navy, which is promised us by every administration, those thirteen original names might be again included in the list.¹ All of these vessels were eventually built, but their history is but a sad one. Most of them were burned to escape capture, even before they got to sea,—one or two of them on the stocks; and at the end of the war, every one of the thirteen had been destroyed or had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

With other vessels, however, which Congress had bought, the national navy was more successful. Paul Jones's exploits, in the *Ranger* and in the *Bon Homme Richard* are well known; they were too picturesque to slip out from history. A large part of the varied general business, conducted by Franklin and the other ministers of America in Europe, related to what may be called the "allied navy" which they created in France. They also issued privateers' commissions. Of these commissions no complete list has appeared in the various sets of documents which make up the European diplomatic history of America. But, in the Stevens collection at Washington, and in the American Philosophical Society's collection at Philadelphia, there is a very large body of correspondence and other manuscript material, which bears principally upon the exploits of the privateers, sailing from French ports, and partly upon those of Jones and other officers who bore the United States commission. A proper study of this correspondence will bring forward as claimants to the gratitude of America, Lambert Wickes and George Conyngham, two men who are scarcely

¹They were the *Washington*, *Raleigh*, *Hancock*, *Randolph*, *Warren*, *Virginia*, *Trumbull*, *Effingham*, *Congress*, *Providence*, *Boston*, *Delaware*, *Montgomery*. Lord Effingham's name was very popular at that time because he had thrown up his commission rather than serve in the army against America.

known to readers of this generation. They are to be counted among the bravest of the brave; they achieved marvellous results with very small means, and they suffered enough in their country's cause to deserve to be called martyrs. The terror with which their exploits impressed the whole mercantile community of England had much to do with bringing about that change of English opinion which has been spoken of already. Poor Wickes was compelled to leave France in the *Reprisal*, when she was not, indeed, really seaworthy, and she went down on the coast of Newfoundland, on her return to America. Wickes and all his crew but one were lost.

After the French alliance, the certainty that the King of France had a navy which, for practical purposes, was as powerful as that of England, gave an excuse to Congress for relaxing its exertions in the building up of our navy. Indeed, the misfortunes which had happened to the thirteen vessels Congress had built might well discourage persons not as sanguine as John Adams. It may be added that, so soon as he left Philadelphia on the diplomatic business of the country, the Marine Committee and Congress itself seem to have been less eager in this case, than they were when they had his persistent resolution to drive them on. At the very end of the war, therefore, the United States navy consisted only of two vessels, and the period when the navy under the pay of the continent is largest is in the years 1777 and 1778. The whole list, from 1775 to 1783, as given by Cooper, is 41 vessels. But several States, while indifferent to what Congress was doing, were maintaining their own navies all along. Probably each State had one or more vessels afloat, after the beginning. Massachusetts, in particular, as belonged to her, as the great maritime State of the confederacy, always had a considerable navy on the sea. In the aggregate, it was perhaps stronger than the national navy afloat was at any one time.

Until the State constitution was adopted in 1780, Massachusetts was governed by a committee of the Council. Many of the members of this committee, from time to time, were Boston merchants, of large experience in maritime affairs. These men frequently found it to the advantage of the State to fit out a vessel which was half cruiser and half merchantman. She carried a cargo to France, to be sold for the credit of the State, and she carried guns enough and men enough to make prizes, which were exchanged for prize money for the credit of their captors. Between the beginning and the end of the war, this Massachusetts navy numbered at least 34 vessels. The finest and largest of them was the *Protector*, built at Salisbury on State account. Captain John Foster Williams, who was the most popular officer in the Massachusetts establishment, commanded the *Protector* in a successful battle against the *Duff*, which he conquered and sent in. But the *Protector* was, alas, one of the unfortunate squadron which was destroyed in the Penobscot, and, in the calamity there, the State lost all its finest vessels. Of the varied transactions, half mercantile and half warlike, which the Naval Committee of the Massachusetts Council carried on, there are quite full memoranda in the archives in the Massachusetts State House. It is in some instances difficult to distinguish the war-vessels belonging to the State from vessels which were sailing as privateers. That is to say, the State would sometimes commission a successful privateer for a single voyage, and its master would make a return to the State board regarding that particular voyage, such as he would only have made to the owners of the privateer on an ordinary occasion. This illustration of the Massachusetts history is an illustration which shows how much is to be learned from the archives of all the colonies, excepting perhaps New York, New Jersey, and Delaware; for it is believed that each of the others had one or more cruisers, at one time or another, under the direction of the State authorities. The State of South Carolina at one time had a quite considerable navy.

But it was the immense success of the privateer fleet of America which carried such terror as has been described to the English merchants. The history of American privateering has, unfortunately, never been written, and the time has gone by when it could have been fully written. But we have an enormous mass of undigested material, which should be studied by some enterprising and diligent historian. Mr. Winsor's full catalogue, which has been alluded to, gives the names of a great number of privateer logs and of the biographies of privateers, which have been printed. There probably exists many more of such logs in manuscript. Indeed, he refers to some, and I have the pleasure of finding one of such manuscripts in our own library. It is that of Captain J. Fisk, and lies before me. The opening page is enough to give the grim or resolute character of the narrative.

EXTRACTS FROM MANUSCRIPT JOURNAL OF CAPT. JOHN FISK.

*Journal of the Sloop Tyrannicide's Cruise,
myself Commander.*

Remarks on Tuesday, the 18th of June, 1776.

At 9 in the morning, Capt. Derby gave me notice of a ship to the southward of Marblehead, standing up toward Boston. Went on board, weighed anchor, stood to the southward, & saw the ship toward Boston. Gave chase after her. At three in the afternoon fired a gun for her to bear down. Saw the Continental schooner coming out of Boston. At half-past three fired a shot at the ship. The schooners and a brig from Boston fired at the ship. We fired a second shot at her; down came her colors. Sent the first lieutenant and six men on board. She is the ship *Lord Howe*, Robert Park, master, from Glasgow, one hundred officers and soldiers on board, belonging to the 71st regiment. Spoke with Captain Tucker in one of the Continental schooners; got a pilot from him to carry us into Boston. He ran the sloop on shore twice, but she received no damage. Thus ends this day.

Remarks on Wednesday, the 19th of June, 1776.

At eight in the evening, came to anchor in Nantasket; the prize came to anchor alongside of us. At ten gave the prize in charge of the Continental schooners, to carry up to Boston. At six in the morning weighed anchor, stood out to sea, saw no sail. At five in the afternoon, bore away for Salem. At seven in the evening, in Salem harbor.

Remarks on Thursday, the 20th of June, 1776.

Employed in getting on board water, provisions, and ship's stores. At four in the afternoon came to sail. Stretched on in the bay; moderate breeze, pleasant weather.

Remarks on Friday, the 21st of June, 1776.

At six in the morning caught some codfish. Calm at twelve, wind breezed up to the southward. Bore away for Cape Ann harbor. At six came to anchor in the harbor. Let the Cape people go on shore to get their clothing. Fair, pleasant weather.

Remarks on Saturday, the 22d of June, 1776.

At six in the morning, sent the first lieutenant on shore, to get the people on board. At noon, the people all on board in boat. Came to sail at three. Came in thick fog; came to anchor. At four came to sail. Fair weather. Stood to the eastward. At five, saw eleven sail of topsail vessels bearing E. N. E., three leagues distant, standing S. W. for Boston. Tacked ship, stood for Salem harbor. In Salem harbor at eleven at night; sent an express to General Ward.

Remarks on Sunday, the 23d of June, 1776.

At three in the morning came to sail; stood to the S. E. At ten, saw the fleet to the southeast. Saw several of our cruisers. Stood toward the fleet; gave them a signal, which the Commodore answered. Then the fleet tacked and stood up for Boston. At six in the afternoon, came to anchor in Nantasket road. Capt. Hardin of the Connecticut brig, came on board. The fleet coming in as

fast as possible. Came on night before the fleet could get in. We came to anchor in Nantasket.

Remarks on Monday, the 24th of June, 1776.

At eight in the morning came to sail; stood out to the eastward; saw the fleet; bore away down to them; fired a signal gun, and hoisted a blue ensign at the topmast head. The Commodore answered it; the fleet tacked, stood for Boston. We beat into Boston or Nantasket Road, almost up to the Graves. Sent master and fifteen hands on board the commodore to warp him up above Deer Island. At ten they came on board again. The fleet seems to be coming into Nantasket. Tacked ship; stood to the eastward; came to sail; went to anchor abreast of Nix's Mate. Pleasant weather.

Remarks on Tuesday, the 25th of June, 1776.

At six in the morning came to sail at eight came to anchor in Nantasket road again.

Remarks on Wednesday, the 26th of June, 1776.

At [] in the morning sent the second lieutenant up to the town of Boston. At four in the afternoon the boat came on board. At five weighed anchor, bound to Salem; at seven came to anchor in Salem Harbor.

Remarks on Thursday, the 27th of June, 1776.

At [] in the morning weighed anchor, stood out in the bay. Saw the fleet to the southeast; saw four of the schooners belonging to the Continent. At four in the afternoon, bore away for Salem; small breeze from the S. E. At seven came to anchor.

Remarks on Friday, the 28th of June, 1776.

People employed getting sundries on board. Fair weather.

I had an opportunity lately to read an unpublished autobiography of Thomas Ward, the father of the late Thomas Wren Ward, the treasurer of Harvard College. This

young man, at fifteen years of age, determined to support his mother, brothers and sisters, by enlisting in a Marblehead privateer. From that time till the war ended he was afloat, —or in an English prison,—or enjoying a brief holiday at home between two voyages. Three times he was taken prisoner, and his experience in New York Harbor, in Quebec, and at Forton, make very interesting parts of his narrative. His record of the success at sea of these Vikings of Salem and Marblehead with whom he sailed, reads like a chapter of the history of some floating Amadis of Gaul. Such records belong in the records of adventure with the old tales of chivalry. Now the State of Massachusetts, sooner or later, seems to have commissioned at least six hundred privateers,—I think the number was much larger. The State archives in a broken list, give 365 names as commissioned and belonging in Boston. The list, nearly complete, of the Salem vessels, numbers 150. But it is to be observed that, in a few instances, the same name appears on both lists. Besides these towns, the coast of Maine, the Merrimack, Cape Ann and Cape Cod, Plymouth, Falmouth and Dartmouth were sending out privateers. Dartmouth was destroyed by General Gray because it was a nest of privateers. It seems certain, therefore, that six hundred is a small estimate for the number of privateers commissioned by Massachusetts. At the end of the war, Salem alone had in commission fifty-nine vessels, carrying four thousand men. At the present moment the United States has on her "active list" of the navy fifteen hundred and twenty-two officers, and the navy is allowed to enlist seventy-five hundred men and seven hundred and fifty apprentices.

It seemed to me pathetic to read, a few weeks since, in a Boston newspaper, a question inquiring, "Who was John Foster Williams of Revolutionary days?" As Williams was the most popular captain of his day in the Massachusetts service, as he fought some battles with matchless intrepidity, it seemed sad that after a hundred years even

his name should be forgotten by "leading editors" and their correspondents. After the war he was appointed to a position in the revenue service of the United States, and held high rank in that important service until his death in the year 1814. He died in Boston in Williams Street, which took its name from his family. I cannot but express the hope that some accomplished person among his numerous relatives will make it a sacred duty to prepare a careful life of this really great naval commander, with distinct reference to his exploits. The battle which he fought in the *Protector*, in which he took the *Admiral Duff*, was one of the well-contested naval actions of the war, and when he brought his prize into port, he was received as Hull was after his victory over the *Guerrière*.

And here the author of this report will ask permission to speak in his own person, that he may confess ignorance, of which the Council cannot be guilty. Separate men may err, but let us hope the Council is always right.

In some studies of this subject which I made in preparing a chapter on it for the Narrative and Critical History of America, I under-estimated the English forces arrayed against the seamen of America. In the year 1776 the English naval estimates provided for 34,665 seamen and marines, in 1777 for 55,129.

In the chapter referred to,—I cited these official returns correctly—and compared them with the best estimate I could make of the number of Americans in arms against England on the sea, I said then "there were some English privateers,—but their number was not considerable." I must now correct this statement. An appeal to Mr. Stevens's invaluable treasure-house, an index to the English archives, shows how far I was wrong. He informs me that the Public Record office of England shows that in 1778 after April three hundred and ninety-four letters of marque and reprisal were issued to Englishmen by the English offices.

In 1778 there were five hundred and fifty-two.

In 1779 there were five hundred and seven.

In 1780 there were three hundred and nine.

In 1781 there were three hundred and fifty-six.

In 1782 there were one hundred and twenty-six.

This does not mean that two thousand two hundred and forty-four different vessels were commissioned. A new commission was granted for every cruise. But it shows that the English privateering was large. I suppose many of these commissions to have been issued,—probably on blanks furnished from England,—by the English commanders in America. A letter from Gen. Tryon in 1779, June 29, says that the Tories there had more than six thousand men afloat in royal privateers at that time “Captured from rebels and other persecuted Loyalists.” The same letter says that these privateers of the English squadron had brought one hundred and forty-two prizes into port within the last five months. These were, however, mostly fishermen, and small coasting vessels.

It is not however the purpose of this paper to attempt detail except by way of illustration. Enough has been said to show the enormous proportions that the war at sea assumed. When it is remembered that the naval power of France was large and that her naval officers were eager to show that it was equal to that of England it will be seen how terrible must have been the losses of the English.

A careful official report made by John Adams in Paris July 6, 1780, shows that at that time the French navy had taken or destroyed twenty-three English war ships, against fifteen which they had lost from their own navy.

In the same time England had taken or destroyed twenty-five vessels of war belonging to Congress,—and had destroyed the fleet of privateers and State cruisers, consisting of seventeen vessels sent by Massachusetts into the Penobscot. Congress had taken and destroyed eight English ships of war. England had lost eleven by ship-

wreck or other accident. This is a loss to England of forty-two ships of war of all grades in four years.

Losses so large as these from the royal navy of England give another intimation of the severity of the loss of her unarmed merchant marine. Hutchinson writing in London in 1777 says that the New Englanders had eighty thousand seamen afloat at that time. He did not mean to include in this estimate, what I may call Franklin's fleet, nor the privateers and cruisers from Southern colonies. At one time I thought his estimate extravagant,—and it cannot be taken as accurate till it has been verified from other sources. But I believe it will prove, that if the naval forces of all classes and all States are included, and the estimate made for the whole confederation and not for New England alone, the number of privateersmen and of other seamen employed in the State navies and the national navy came very near one hundred thousand at the times when most men were at sea; sometimes, perhaps, even passed that number.

It must be remembered that some of the commissions given to privateers were to small vessels, cruising near land—as to cruisers in Narragansett Bay. On the other hand, vessels as large as the *Alliance* and *Protector* and *Richard* carried three hundred and even four hundred men. The average crew of a Salem privateer in 1783 when the war ended, seems to have been about sixty-six. But I am disposed to place the average crew in war time quite as high as one hundred. The nineteen vessels lost at Penobscot had carried two thousand men—and they were not fitted for cruising. Cruisers took many more men than they needed to fight their ships,—because they had to provide strong crews for their prizes. If this be a correct average,—a force of eight hundred vessels at sea would give eighty thousand men, for the whole country in the naval service.

Of the coöperation of the French fleet we have in print

many important authorities. A monograph like that of our associate, Dr. Green, on the *Comte des Deux Ponts*, is invaluable. There exists within reach, in America the MS. journals of Maccarty, the commander of one vessel in D'Estaing's fleet. He was transferred to the *America* in Portsmouth after the loss of the *Magnifique* in Boston harbor. I have here a translation of the journal of the period when he was captain of the *Magnifique*, and while he was superintending the completion of the American ships. The French archives, of course, in the reports of their naval officers, offer large supplies of detail. Mr. Stevens's indexes enable him to consult the regular reports officially made, from time to time, by each ship-captain to the Admiralty.

These references are enough to show that if one of our accomplished naval officers will take up the pleasant duty of writing the history of the Naval War of the Revolution, he will find much material which has not, as yet, been thoroughly explored. A careful study of them, will, I think, certainly show :—

1. That America had many more men in warlike service against England on the sea than on the land. There were a few weeks of 1776—when Washington had called out all the available militia—so that on paper the country had 90,000 men in the Continental line and in the Militia. It is possible that for more weeks there were a few thousand more soldiers than sailors. But, for all the rest of the war, from 1776 forward, it may be safely said that a larger force of Americans were seeking and fighting the enemy at sea than were embodied against him on land.

2. It seems probable, that this force was larger than the force of seamen which England employed against America in the Atlantic. It is certain that it is a much larger force than the Royal Navy employed—it is probably larger than were engaged in the Navy and Privateers.

3. It will also appear that more than three thousand prizes, from the British merchant marine, were captured by the American Navy and privateersmen. This loss crippled very severely the mercantile prosperity of England. It is to be noted, in the same connection, that the supplies of spars and other naval stores from America were cut off,—and that the navy and mercantile marine of France and Spain had the advantage of them.

4. The activity of the privateers served the direct purposes of the American Army. Washington's mortars, used in the siege of Boston, were those taken from the *Nancy* in Boston Bay. The powder used by Arnold against Quebec, is said to have been that brought from the British Islands by Hopkins and Whipple. In one prize taken by Jones, before he crossed the ocean, were ten thousand English uniforms. D'Estaing's fleet in the fall of 1778 was refitted in Boston Harbor by the stores sent out to the English in New York, which had been captured by New England privateers. In 1779 Hopkins took eight out of ten vessels which Clinton was sending with men and stores to Georgia. It is fair to say that the victories of Gates and Greene and Washington are largely due to the resources which the country received in hundreds of such captures.

It is desirable that the precise facts bearing on such successes should be carefully discovered and arranged. When the country and the world discusses the question of the American fisheries, still a question of the first importance, careless critics have been heard to say that there are but one hundred thousand men engaged in those fisheries; and that so small a body is an unimportant factor of the strength of the nation. Probably there were not more than one hundred thousand of such men in the years between 1775 and 1783. But they were enough. It was they who crippled English commerce. It was they who broke down the haughty indifference with which England regarded the war

when it began. It was they, largely, who clothed and provided the American army. It was they who secured Independence. It is not simply true, that, but for them we should have no national fisheries. But for them, there would be no nation.

NOTE.—The severity of a Council report may perhaps be lightened a little by the following ballad, which only exists in manuscript.

THE YANKEE PRIVATEER.

[BY ARTHUR HALE,]

I.

Come, listen and I'll tell you
How first I went to sea,
To fight against the British
And earn our liberty.
We shipped with Captain Whipple
Who never knew a fear,
The Captain of the *Providence*,
The Yankee privateer.
We sailed and we sailed
And made good cheer;
There were many pretty men
On the Yankee privateer.

II.

The British Lord High Admiral
He wished old Whipple harm,
He wrote him that he'd hang him
From the end of his Yard-arm.
"My lord," wrote Whipple back again,
"It seems to me it's clear,
That if you want to hang him,
You must catch your Privateer."
So we sailed and we sailed
And we made good cheer,
For not a British frigate
Could come near the Privateer.

III.

We sailed to the South'ard
 And nothing did we meet
 Till we found three British frigates
 And their West Indian fleet.
 Old Whipple shut our ports
 And crawled up near,
 And shut us all below
 On the Yankee Privateer.
 So slowly he sailed
 We fell to the rear
 And not a soul suspected
 The Yankee Privateer.

IV.

At dark he put the lights out
 And forward we ran,
 And silently we boarded
 The biggest merchantman.
 We knocked down the watch,—
 The lubbers shook for fear,—
 She's a prize, without a shot,
 To the bold Privateer!
 We sent the prize North
 And dropped to the rear,
 And all day we slept
 On the bold Privateer.

V.

For ten days we sailed,
 And, e'er the sun rose,
 Each night a prize we'd taken
 Beneath the Lion's nose.
 When the British looked to see
 Why their ships should disappear
 They found they had in convoy
 A Yankee Privateer.
 But we sailed and we sailed
 And never thought of fear;
 Not a coward was on board
 The Yankee Privateer.

VI.

The biggest British frigate
Bore round to give us chase,
But though he was the fleetest,
Old Whipple wouldn't race,
Till he'd raked her fore and aft,—
For the lubbers couldn't steer,—
Then he showed them the heels
Of the Yankee Privateer.
We sailed and we sailed
And we made good cheer
For not a British frigate
Could come near the privateer.

VII.

Then we sailed to the North,
To the town we all know,
And there lay our prize;
All anchored in a row.
And welcome were we
To our homes so dear,
And we shared a million dollars
On the Yankee Privateer.
We'd sailed and we'd sailed
And we made good cheer
We had all full pockets
On the bold Privateer.

VIII.

Then we each manned a ship
And our sails unfurled,
And we bore the stars and stripes
O'er the oceans of the world.
From the proud flag of Britain
We swept the seas clear,
And we earned our independence
On the Yankee Privateer!
Then, sailors and landsmen,
One more cheer!
Here is three times three
For the Yankee Privateer!

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