

NAVAL HISTORY OF GREAT BRITAIN.

LIGHT SQUADRONS AND SINGLE SHIPS.

HAVING given an account of the first engagement fought between an American and a French frigate, we shall offer no apology for inserting in these pages an account of the second. On the 1st of February, at 7 h. 30 m. A.M., the United States 36-gun frigate *Constellation*, still commanded by Commodore Thomas Truxton,¹ being about five leagues to the westward of Basseterre-road, Guadaloupe, working to windward, discovered in the south-east quarter, standing south-west, the French 40-gun frigate *Vengeance*, Captain Sébastien-Louis-Marie Pichot.

The American commodore immediately went in chase; and M. Pichot ran from him, for the reason, as alleged afterwards by some of the French officers, that the *Vengeance* had her decks encumbered with hogsheads of sugar, which she had brought from Guadaloupe, and was carrying to Europe. Let that have been as it may, at 8 P.M. the *Constellation* got within hail of the *Vengeance*, and received a fire from her stern and quarter guns. In a little time the former, having gained a position on the French frigate's weather-quarter, opened a very destructive fire; and to which, from her position, the *Constellation* received a much less effective return than if she had run fairly alongside. The mutual cannonade continued, in this manner, until nearly 1 A.M. on the 2nd; when the *Vengeance*, owing to the damaged state of the *Constellation*'s rigging and masts, particularly her mainmast, was enabled to range ahead out of gun-shot, and the battle ended.

The force of the *Constellation*, in guns, men, and size, has already been given.² The armament of the *Vengeance*, with the

¹ See vol. ii., p. 363.

² *Ibid.*, p. 364.

addition of four brass 36-pounder carronades, was the same as that of her sister-ship, the *Résistance*, captured in March, 1797;¹ and her complement may also be stated the same as the latter's, exclusive of about 60 passengers.

The loss sustained by the American frigate amounted to one officer and 13 seamen and marines killed, and two officers and 23 seamen and marines wounded. That of the *Vengeance* is represented, in the American accounts, at 150 in killed and wounded; but, according to a published letter from one of her passengers, it amounted to only 20 men killed and 40 wounded.

The officer killed on board the *Constellation* was Mr. James Jervis, a young midshipman, who, with some of the men, fell overboard with the mainmast. "It seems this young gentleman," says Commodore Truxton, "was apprised of the mast going in a few minutes, by an old seaman; but he had already so much of the principle of an officer ingrafted on his mind, not to leave his quarters on any account, that he told the men, if the mast went, they must go with it; which shortly afterwards occurred, and only one man was saved."

Although, undoubtedly, the American frigate was the superior both in force and effectiveness, yet, had the *Constellation* made a prize of the *Vengeance*, no one can deny that it would have redounded to the honour of Commodore Truxton, and been a subject of fair triumph to so young a navy as that of the United States. But, if it be true, as the French captain is represented to have stated, that the flag of the *Vengeance* came down three times during the contest, what was the *Constellation* about that she did not attempt to take possession? It would seem that the *Constellation*, notwithstanding she was to windward, persisted in remaining at too great a distance from her antagonist to observe in the dark what the latter was doing. According to Captain Pichot's account, indeed, the *Vengeance* lost all three masts by the *Constellation*'s fire; and yet Commodore Truxton, although so minute in his "Journal" as to tell us that, previous to the action, he got "the large trumpet in the lee gangway ready to speak" the French frigate, takes no notice of the loss of her masts.

The most extraordinary circumstance, however, remains to be told. The *Vengeance*, M. Pichot declares, was compelled, owing to the inexperience of her crew, to remain stationary for three days, while jury-masts were erecting; and, during the whole of that time, the *Constellation* lay to windward, with her fore and

¹ See vol. ii., p. 91.

mizen masts still standing (her mainmast had fallen a few minutes after the firing had ceased), and yet did not bear down, or evince the least inclination to renew the engagement. The *Constellation*, soon afterwards, made sail for and anchored in Port Royal, Jamaica; and the *Vengeance*, no less happy than surprised at such an escape, steered for Curacoa, where she arrived in a very shattered state.

No sooner did the commodore's account of his rencontre reach the United States than his fellow-citizens, particularly those of his own, or the federal party, set to work to bring to an issue on paper that which had been left undecided on the ocean. They pronounced and published the action as a victory; ate dinners, and drank themselves drunk in honour of it; and, when the commodore arrived in port, assailed him on all sides with addresses of congratulation, founded on assertions that the commodore's letter had never sanctioned, and from which, although not possessed perhaps of a very extraordinary share, his modesty must have recoiled.

We formerly mentioned, that the merchants of London presented the commodore with a piece of plate for having captured the *Insurgente*. Such was actually the spirit of party in the United States, that the democrats abused Commodore Truxton, calling him *Tory*, &c., for having accepted it. About the middle of the year 1800 the commodore was promoted to the command of the 44-gun frigate *President*; but the moment the democrats came into power, on March the 4th in the succeeding year, he was displaced, and, as a proof how liberal republicans can be, was never afterwards put in command. The more moderate among the democrats, however, did at length relent a little; and Commodore Truxton got appointed (of all places for a commodore!) sheriff of Philadelphia; in which office he realized an independency.

On the 5th of February, at 6 A.M., the British 16-gun ship-sloop *Fairy* (armed similarly to *Rattlesnake*, vol. ii., p. 392), Captain Joshua Sydney Horton, and 18-gun brig-sloop, *Harpy* (same force as *Raccoon*, vol. ii., p. 415), Captain Henry Bazely, weighed and set sail from St. Aubin's bay in the island of Jersey, with the wind a fresh breeze at north-west, to reconnoitre the port of St. Malo, and discover if a French frigate, which on the preceding evening had chased the 14-gun brig *Seafflower*, Lieutenant Murray, had got into that harbour. At 11 h. 30 m. A.M., Cape Frehel bearing south-east distant five or six miles, a large ship, evidently a frigate, was discovered in the south-south-west

quarter, running down close alongshore to the westward, with a light breeze nearly aft, or from the south-south-east. This was the French 38-gun frigate *Pallas*, Captain Jacques Epron, from St. Malo bound to Brest, and the same, as it appears, that had chased the *Seaflower*.

At about 20 m. p.m., seeing no chance of bringing the *Pallas* to action while she remained so close under the land, Captain Horton tacked and stood off, in the hope that the frigate would follow the two sloops to an offing. This the *Pallas* immediately did; and at 1 p.m. an engagement, within pistol-shot, commenced between her and the *Fairy* and *Harpy*, the latter close astern of her companion. The action, during which the *Harpy* obtained several opportunities of raking the *Pallas*, continued until 3 p.m.; when the French frigate ceased firing, and made all sail to the northward and eastward, having the wind now from the south-west.

So great were the damages which the *Fairy* and *Harpy* had received in their rigging and sails, that it was not until 3 h. 15 m. p.m. that the sloops were in a condition to make sail in chase. About this time the *Pallas*, observing two sail nearly ahead, or in the north-east by north, hauled up to the northward and westward. Captain Horton immediately made the signal for the *Harpy*, who was the more advanced in the chase, to endeavour to gain the wind of the enemy. At 4 p.m. three sail, including the two already noticed as seen by the *Pallas*, were discovered by the two sloops. No doubt being entertained that the vessels approaching were friends, the *Fairy* made the signal for an enemy; which was repeated by the *Harpy*, both sloops firing guns every five minutes to enforce attention to it.

These ships, then working up from the northward with a light wind from the south-east by south, were the British 38-gun frigate *Loire*, Captain James Newman Newman, 20-gun ship *Danaé*, Captain Lord Proby, and 16-gun ship-sloop *Railleur*, Captain William James Turquand; and all of which had sailed from Plymouth on the 27th and 28th of January, purposely to intercept the *Pallas* and a corvette, expected to be on their way from St. Malo to Brest. At 4 h. 15 m. p.m. the *Pallas* bore away large; and, in order to deceive her new pursuers and distract their attention, hoisted English colours, and endeavoured to repeat the signal made by the *Fairy* and *Harpy*. At 4 h. 30 m. p.m. *Roche Douvre* bore from the *Fairy* north-north-east distant six or seven miles; and at 5 h. 30 m. p.m. the

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Pallas bore west, and the Harpy west by south, the breeze now light from the south-east.

At 7 P.M. Captain Bazely received orders to go ahead, as far as signals were discernible between the two sloops, and make the private signal to the two ships, the Loire and Danaé, upon her lee bow. This was done, and subsequently the Fairy also made the private signal; but it was not answered by either the Loire, Danaé, or Railleur, which latter was considerably ahead and to windward of her two consorts. Notwithstanding this apparent remissness, Captain Horton was tolerably satisfied that the ships approaching were friends, and therefore stood on in chase of the Pallas. We may add to this, that Captain Newman also knew (although that is no excuse for not answering the private signal), that the two ships and brig in sight were the Pallas, Fairy, and Harpy; having learnt from Lord Proby, who had been detached for information to Jersey, upon what mission the two sloops had sailed.

At about 7 h. 45 m. P.M., observing ahead, and close under the Seven Islands, a ship approaching, which was the Railleur, the Pallas tacked; and at 8 P.M., while passing about three miles to windward of the Harpy, and at a still greater distance from the Loire, both on the opposite or larboard tack, was fired at, of course without effect, by the Loire. The latter and the Harpy then tacked in chase; and at about 9 P.M. the Loire spoke the Fairy, who had also just tacked, and whose commander informed Captain Newman of the name and force of the Pallas, at that time "about a gun-shot and a half" upon the Fairy's weather quarter. Whether owing to bad management, bad sailing, or disabled rigging from her previous action with the two sloops, the Pallas was gradually gained upon by the chasing ships, the Loire, Railleur, and Harpy especially.

At about 10 h. 30 m. P.M. the Loire had weathered her opponent so much as to be able to set her topgallant studding-sails, and at 11 P.M. arrived up with the Pallas. The Railleur, being ahead of the Loire, was directed to fire her broadside and drop astern. This the sloop did; and immediately afterwards, the nearest of the Seven Islands bearing south-west by south, distant about 750 yards, the Loire commenced a close action with the Pallas, who opened a spirited fire in return. In a little time a battery upon the island, of several guns and a howitzer, began a smart fire upon the British ships, and did considerable damage to the Loire. In this way the action continued between the French frigate and shore-battery on one side, and the

Loire, *Railleur*, *Harpy*, and *Fairy* on the other ; the combatants all on the starboard tack, with the wind, as before, blowing moderately from the south-east.

At about 1 h. 30 m. A.M. on the 6th, the *Harpy* fetched close under the stern of the *Railleur*, then engaging the *Pallas* with great gallantry, and poured her broadside into the French frigate's quarter. This was repeated with such destructive effect, as to induce some one on board the frigate (especially as a man had been shot while ascending the mizen-shrouds with a lantern to repeat the signal of surrender) to hail the brig with the exclamation, "Ne tirez pas encore, messieurs, nous sommes à vous." The *Harpy* then ceased her fire, as about the same time did the *Loire*, *Railleur*, and *Fairy*. The *Loire* and *Harpy* each lowered down a boat and sent her first-lieutenant (Edmund Rayner and James Watson) to take possession of the prize. Conceiving, from a bustle abaft on board the *Railleur*, that a man had fallen into the water, Lieutenant Watson yawed out of his course: in consequence of this, the *Loire's* boat reached the *Pallas* a few minutes before the *Harpy's*; but the latter had the honour of conveying Captain Epron to the *Loire*.

The established complement of the *Loire* was 284 men and boys; but she had on board no more than 260, about 100 of whom had "volunteered" from the prison-ships, and ran from their quarters almost as soon as the action commenced. Of those 260 in crew, the *Loire* lost three seamen killed, and three midshipmen (Watkins Owen Pell, Francis William Eves, and John Allen Medway), 15 seamen, and one marine wounded. The *Railleur*, out of a complement of 76 men and boys, had one midshipman (William Prothers) and one gunner's mate killed, and three seamen and one marine wounded. The *Fairy*, out of a complement of 120 men and boys, had, in the day action, four seamen killed, her commander (slightly), purser (Mr. Hughes), and six seamen wounded, four of them badly; but in the night action the *Fairy* had only one seaman wounded. The *Harpy*, out of a crew the same as the *Fairy's*, had one seaman killed and three wounded in her first action, but escaped without any casualty in her second; making the total loss on the British side nine killed and 36 wounded.

The official letter of Captain Newman does not mention a word of any loss having been sustained by the *Pallas*: a very improper omission, as it leads to an inference that the enemy's frigate struck her colours without having lost a man in the action. That such was not the case is clear, as well from the

state of the ship's hull, which was pierced by shot in several places, as from the state of her lower masts, all three of which, just before daylight on the 7th, went over her side in a squall.

Captain Newman states that the crew of the Pallas numbered 350; but the officers of the latter swore in the prize-court that they had 362 men when the action, meaning, we presume, that with the two sloops, commenced. Hence the 12 men constituting the difference between the two statements were, in all probability, killed in the preceding or day action. A greater loss than that must, we suppose, have been incurred in the night action, when the Loire's heavy broadsides came into play; but, for the reason already stated, we are unable to give the particulars.

Instead of exhibiting the usual comparative statement, we shall merely say that, unaided by any of her consorts, the Loire, mounting 46 guns (long 18 and 9 pounders, with 32-pounder carronades), was more than a match for the Pallas; and that the latter's defence was highly creditable to her officers and crew.

The Pallas was a remarkably handsome frigate of 1029 tons, and had never before been at sea. She was of course purchased by Government; and, under the name of Pique, long continued a favourite 36-gun frigate in the lists of the British navy.

For what, on one side at least, may be called a single-ship action, the details of the occurrences which led to the capture of the French frigate Pallas have given us considerable trouble, and are not yet drawn up to our entire satisfaction. Not, however, because there has been so little said or written on the subject, for few actions of the kind have given rise to so much discussion as the pages of the Naval Chronicle can testify; but owing to the obscure and contradictory statements which have been published, all resting upon authority equally respectable. At all events, no one can deny that the conduct of Captains Horton and Bazely was highly gallant and praiseworthy. Nor must the efforts of the Harpy be disparaged simply because she was an 18-gun sloop. The Harpy was armed in the same manner as the Pelican, that had rendered herself so famous in beating off the Médée; and the former's 32-pounder carronades, in the close and raking position in which they were frequently fired, did considerable mischief to the Pallas, as Captain Epron himself was candid enough to acknowledge.

Although, owing to some omission in Captain Newman's letter, a little delay occurred in doing justice to the claims of

Captain Bazely, that officer, as well as his brother commander, Captain Horton, was at length promoted to post-rank.

On the 1st of March, in the middle of the night, the British 12-pounder 36-gun frigate *Néréide*, Captain Frederick Watkins, cruising off the Penmarcks, discovered to windward five ships and a schooner. As soon as she had made the necessary preparation for battle, the *Néréide* hauled up for the strangers; which, at daylight on the 2nd, were seen to be all armed vessels, and were then lying to, as if determined to have a contest with the British frigate. Nor will it be considered that the French commodore had formed a very rash resolve, when the force of his squadron is stated.

The largest ship was the *Bellone*, of Bordeaux, measuring 643 tons, and mounting 24 long 8-pounders on the main deck, and six brass 36-pounder carronades on the quarter-deck and fore-castle; total 30 guns, with a complement of at least 220 men.¹ The three remaining ships, also from Bordeaux, were the *Vengeance*, of 18 long 8-pounders² and 174 men, *Favorite*, of 16 long 6-pounders and 120 men, and *Huron*, of 16 long 4-pounders and 87 men; and the schooner was the *Tirailleuse*, of 14 long 4-pounders and 80 men; making a total of 94 guns and 681 men.

Just as the *Néréide* arrived within gun-shot of these seemingly pugnacious privateersmen, their hearts failed them, and the four ships and schooner made all sail on different courses. The British frigate went in immediate chase, and continued the pursuit until night shut out the fugitives from her view. On the 2nd, however, at daylight, the *Néréide* regained a sight of one of the ships; and, after a 12 hours' chase and a run of 123 miles, captured the *Vengeance*.

On the 5th of March, at 8 A.M., in latitude 50° 2' north, longitude 14° 43' west, the British 18-pounder 36-gun frigate *Phœbe*, Captain Robert Barlow, was borne down upon, and fired at, by the French ship privateer *Heureux*, of 22 long brass 12-pounders and 220 men. The latter, as it appeared, mistook the *Phœbe* for an Indiaman, and did not discover her mistake until she had arrived within point-blank musket-shot. The *Heureux* then wore upon the *Phœbe*'s weather-bow, and hauled to the wind on the same tack; hoping, by a well-directed fire, to disable the *Phœbe*'s masts, rigging, and sails, and thereby effect her escape.

¹ In Captain Watkins's letter in the *Gazette*, 420; probably a typographical mistake.

² *Ibid.*; 12-pounders, but we know they were only 8-pounders.

The fire from the British frigate, however, was too powerful to be withstood by so comparatively inferior a foe, and the *Heureux* struck her colours.

The *Phoebe* had three seamen killed, or mortally wounded, and three slightly wounded; the *Heureux*, 18 men killed, and 25 wounded, most of whom lost limbs. The latter was a very complete flush-decked ship, coppered and copper-fastened, highly finished, and of large dimensions, measuring 598 tons. She was therefore readily purchased for the use of the British navy, and, under the same name, became classed as a 22-gun post-ship.

On the 15th of March the British 20-gun ship *Danaé*, Captain Lord Proby, while watching the French fleet in Brest, became lost to the service under the following discreditable circumstances. At 9 h. 30 m. P.M., Jackson, one of the captains of the foretop, and who had been secretary to Parker in the *Nore* mutiny, assisted by some prisoners and a part of the crew, rushed on the quarter-deck, knocked down the master, and cut him severely over the head. They then threw him down the main hatchway, and battened down the grating, placing over it the boats filled with shot. By this means the remainder of the crew were prevented from retaking the ship. When the mutiny broke out all the officers, except Lord Proby, the marine-officer, and the master, were in bed. On being informed by the marine-officer of what had happened, Lord Proby attempted to get up the after hatchway, but found it already guarded by nearly 20 men. One of them cut his lordship on the head; and no possibility existed of forcing the hatchway.

Lord Proby and the marine-officer then contrived to muster about ten cutlasses, four muskets, and some pocket-pistols. These were distributed among the most trustworthy of about 40 men; who, when the business commenced, were asleep in their hammocks. The hope then was that the mutineers would be forced to keep the sea; but the wind unfortunately changed, and they were enabled the next morning, the 16th, to fetch under Fort Conquête in Camaret bay, where they anchored the ship. Jackson then sent the jolly-boat on board the French 16-gun brig-corvette *Colombe*, at anchor in the bay; and which brig on the 14th, with a convoy under her charge, had been chased in by the *Danaé* herself. At 2 P.M. the first-lieutenant of the *Colombe*, accompanied by a detachment of soldiers, went on board the *Danaé*, and asked Lord Proby to whom he surrendered. His lordship replied, "To the French nation, but

not to mutineers." Both vessels then steered for Brest, where they arrived on the 17th, after having been chased during several hours by the frigates Anson and Boadicea, Captains Philip Charles Durham and Richard Goodwin Keats; who, deceived by Jackson's hoisting the horary and numerical signals, supposed the Danaé to be in chase of an enemy. Lord Proby had, however, thrown out of the cabin-window and sunk, with lead attached to it, the box containing the private signals.

The officers of the Danaé were landed at Brest; but the ship's company, including the mutineers, were, to the astonishment and chagrin of the latter, marched to Dinan prison. Vice-admiral Bruix, together with the commandant of marines and all the other French officers at the port, behaved with great politeness and attention to Lord Proby and his officers; the whole of the former expressing their utter detestation of the conduct of the mutineers. Captain Louis-Léon Jacob, formerly of the 36-gun frigate Bellone, captured with the Hoche in the year 1798, nobly offered to give louis d'ors for all the bank of England notes of the officers. Several of the latter, soon afterwards, were permitted to return to England on their parole.

On the 20th of March, in the evening, as the British 12-pounder 32-gun frigate Mermaid, Captain Robert Dudley Oliver, and 16-gun brig-sloop Peterel (armed like the Fairy), Captain Francis William Austen, were cruising in the bay of Marseille, Captain Oliver directed the Peterel to keep close inshore by way of deception, thereby to capture any vessels that might be running along the coast.

On the next morning some vessels of a convoy of 50 sail, from Cette bound to Toulon and Marseille, under the protection of an armed ship, brig, and xebec, were descried and chased, and two of them, a bark and bombard, both laden with wheat, captured. On the same afternoon, when near to Cape Couronne, the Peterel came to action with the three armed vessels; but which, after a short contest, observing the Mermaid, although at a great distance, beating up from to leeward, made sail to get away. The ship and xebec, one, the Cerf of 14 long brass 6-pounders and about 90 men, the other, the Lejoille (named after the captain of the Généreux), commanded by the commodore of the division, Captain (de vais.) Pierre-Paul Raccord, and mounting six long brass 6-pounders, and about 50 men, effected their escape by running on shore. The brig-corvette, which was the Ligurienne of 14 long 6-pounders and two 36-pounder carronades, all brass, and 104 men, Lieutenant Francois-Auguste