

A
FULL AND CORRECT ACCOUNT
OF THE CHIEF
NAVAL OCCURRENCES
OF
THE LATE WAR
BETWEEN
GREAT BRITAIN
AND
THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA;
PRECEDED BY
A CURSORY EXAMINATION
OF THE
AMERICAN ACCOUNTS OF THEIR NAVAL ACTIONS FOUGHT
PREVIOUS TO THAT PERIOD:
TO WHICH IS ADDED
AN APPENDIX;
WITH PLATES.

.....
By **WILLIAM JAMES.**
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"Truth is always brought to light by time and reflection; while the life of the day lives by bustle, noise, and precipitation."

Murray's Tactica, B. II. 90.

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1817.

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furnishes evidence of a more brilliant and decisive victory, gained by a vessel, so inferior in size, strength, and armament, to her antagonist."

Captain Diron, to flatter the vanity of the Americans, and suit his own convenience, named his vessel the Decatur, and commissioned her at the port of Charleston. It is for the latter reason only, that the action appears in these pages.

On the morning of the 5th of September, while H. M. brig Boxer, was lying at anchor near Penguin Point, a few miles to the eastward of Portland, in the United States, the American brig Enterprise made her appearance. Captain Blyth immediately got under weigh to engage her; leaving his surgeon, two midshipmen, and an army-officer, a passenger, on shore at a place called Manhagan, "shooting pigeons."

The action commenced about a quarter past 3 P. M. and in the very first broadside, an 18-pounder shot passed through Captain Blyth's body, and shattered his left arm. The same broadside killed a marine and a seaman; and wounded several others of the Boxer's crew. Almost immediately after the loss of her gallant commander, the Boxer's main-top-mast was shot away. This enabled the Enterprise to take a

taking position, and to maintain it till the contest ended. No British official account of this action has been published.

The Boxer was much cut up in hull and spars; and lost, besides her commander, 3 men killed, and 17 men wounded, 4 of them mortally; total killed and wounded 21.

The Enterprise suffered but little injury in her hull and spars. Her rigging and sails were a good deal cut. She lost 1 man killed, her commander, a midshipman, and 11 men wounded; the 2 first, and 1 man, mortally; total killed and wounded 14. The American official letter describes no "slightly wounded." They may have amounted to a few more.

The Boxer arrived on the North American station, with the usual armament of her class; but her commander obtained, at Halifax, two additional carronades; making her force, in the action, twelve carronades, 18-pounders, and two long 6-pounders. Gun-brigs are not allowed boat-carronades; consequently, fourteen were all the guns the Boxer mounted. The American official account gives her no more; but Mr. Clarke, depending more upon "Niles' Weekly Register," quotes from that:—"His Majesty's *fine brig of war* Boxer, of 18 guns;" and again says:—"Boxer, guns mounted 18."

The Boxer had, on leaving St. John, N. Brunswick, a few days before the action, 71 men, 6

boys, and a passenger; total 78. Of these, 8 seamen were absent in a prize; and the passenger, surgeon, and 2 midshipmen, as stated before, on shore at Manhegan; leaving a residue of 60 men, and 6 boys.

The prisoners received from the Boxer, according to the American papers, amounted, including the mortally wounded, to 62; making, with the 4 killed in the action, 66. To put this beyond a doubt, some American gentlemen sought for the party that had been left at Manhegan. An Eastern paper gives the following as the substance of their information:—"They (the party on shore) gave precisely the same account of the force of the Boxer as the other officers, and without communication with them. The crew of the Boxer, at the time of the engagement, according to their statement, consisted only of 66."

The "Particulars of the action," furnished a newspaper-editor by one of the Enterprise's officers, stated that, out of "115 picked men," the Boxer had, "when the action commenced, 104." The official letter declared, that she had "between 20 and 25 killed." (App. No. 45.) Captain Hull, next, wrote Commodore Bainbridge, that he, having "counted upwards of 90 hammocks," (two are generally allowed for each man,) had no doubt she "had 100 men on board;" but found it "impossible to get at

the number killed." To convince the bulk of the Americans, that the Boxer had but 66 men and boys, was therefore a vain task. The few moderate men who attempted it, were scouted as traitors or *tories*; and even Mr. Clarke, the historian, takes the safe side. Although he would not acknowledge Lieutenant M'Call's letter, as any authority for the number of guns mounted by the Boxer, he considers it unquestionable, as to the number of her killed.

The Enterprise mounted fourteen carronades, 18-pounders, and two long 9-pounders. One American journal, besides giving that as her force, states the guns, complement, and tonnage of the Boxer, with the utmost correctness. The complement of the Enterprise cannot be fixed with the same certainty as her guns. The commander of the British schooner Fly, captured by the Enterprise about the 26th of August, and carried into Portsmouth, N. Hampshire, says the latter sailed from that port in quest of the Boxer, Captain Burrows having received intelligence of her being on the coast, with part of her crew absent; that she (the Enterprise) then added several volunteers to her original complement, which consisted of 113 men, and 3 boys. Some American papers stated the Enterprise's complement as high as 125; others as low as 102. The latter probably meant, exclusive of officers. The U. S. brig Viper, of only 12 guns,

had 93 men ; Nautilus, of 14 guns, 106 men ; Vixen, of the same force, 130 men ; Rattlesnake and Syren, of 16 guns each, 131 and 137 men. The two last-named brigs had each 2 lieutenants, besides her commander ; and so had the Enterprise. To avoid over-rating the latter's complement, let it be fixed at, including volunteers, 120 men, and 3 boys.

The Enterprise was originally a schooner ; and her full dimensions, in hull, spars, and sails, as a schooner, appear in the M.S. memorandum-book, before referred to. (See p. 111.) Soon after the late war commenced, the Enterprise was cut in two, lengthened, (so as to have one more port of a-side,) and altered to a brig, at Washington. The Nautilus, captured by the Shannon, was also originally a schooner ; and was altered to a brig without being lengthened. By adding, therefore, to the Enterprise's original length, the distance between the fore-side of one of the Nautilus's ports, to the aft side of the next port, which is 8 feet 6 inches, we have the present length of the Enterprise. This makes her 245 tons ; but several British officers who have seen the Enterprise, state that she is about 260 tons. The Nautilus's top-sides are nearly as stout as those of our first-class brigs : while the Boxer had only one timber between each port ; which made her top-sides pervious to every grape-shot that was fired. The spars of the

Enterprise will be considered as no larger, than those which the Nautilus had, when captured.

Dimensions of the two brigs.

	Boxer.		Enterprise.		
	Ft.	In.	Ft.	In.	
Length on deck, from rabbit to rabbit,	84	4	97	1	
Breadth, extreme,	22	1½	23	8	
Main-mast, {	length,	53	4	62	0
	diameter,	1	5½	1	10½
Main-yard, {	length,	39	9	50	0
	diameter,	0	9½	0	10½

This is the proper place to give an extract from the American "Particulars:"—"At 3 P.M. tacked, and bore up for the enemy, taking him to be one of his majesty's brigs of the *largest size*!"

None of the praises lavished upon the "*fine brig of war Boxer*," could gain her a place among the national vessels of the United States. She was put up to auction, and sold as a merchant-brig; for which service only, (and that in peaceable times,) she was ever calculated.

Comparative force of the two brigs.

	Boxer.		Enterprise.	
Broadside-metal in pounds, {	l. guns,	6		9
	carr.	108		126
		— 114		— 135
Complement, {	men,	60		120
	boys,	6		3
		— 66		— 123
Size in tons,		179		245

The superiority in weight of metal is trifling; that in number of men, *two-fold*. Gun-brigs are allowed but one lieutenant, one master's-mate, and two midshipmen. The absence of the two midshipmen, the shameful defection of the acting master's-mate, and three seamen, (App. No. 46.) and the fall of her brave commander by the first broadside, rendered the Boxer's situation, at the very onset of the engagement, peculiarly unfortunate. On the other hand, the Enterprise, after her commander was wounded, had still two lieutenants, and four or five midshipmen, left, to carry on the action. These circumstances considered, the disparity between the two crews, was even greater than the numerical difference, already so great.

None but a novice in American history, will be surprised at the following paragraph in Mr. Low's book:—"The President of the United States, having considered the Boxer as equal in force to the Enterprise, has ordered her to be delivered up for the benefit of the captors."

No. 45.

From Lieutenant M'Call to Commodore Hull.

U. S. brig Enterprise, Portland,

September 7, 1813.

SIR,

In consequence of the unfortunate death of Lieutenant William Burrows, late commander of this vessel, it devolves on me to acquaint you with the result of the cruise. After sailing from Portsmouth on the 1st instant, we steered to the eastward, and on the morning of the 3d, off Wood island, discovered a schooner, which we chased into this harbour, where we anchored. On the morning of the 4th weighed anchor, and swept out, and continued our course to the eastward. Having received information of several privateers being off Manhagan, we stood for that place, and on the following morning, in the bay near Penguin point, discovered a brig getting under way, which appeared to be a vessel of war, and to which we immediately gave chase. She fired several guns, and stood for us, having four ensigns hoisted. After reconnoitering and discovering her force, and the nation to which she belonged, we hauled upon a wind to stand out of the bay, and at 3 o'clock shortened sail, tacked to run down, with an intention to bring her to close action. At 20 minutes after 3 P.M. when within half pistol-shot, the firing commenced from both, and after being warmly kept up, and with some manœuvring, the enemy hailed, and said they had surrendered, at 4 P.M.; *their colours, being nailed to the masts, could not be hauled down.* She proved to be H. B. M.'s brig Boxer, of 14 guns, Samuel Blythe, Esq. commander, who fell in the early part of the engagement, having received a cannon-shot through the body; and I am sorry to add that Lieutenant Burrows, who had gallantly led us into action, fell also about the same time by a musket-ball, which terminated his existence in eight hours.

The *Enterprise* suffered much in spars and rigging ; and the *Boxer* in spars, rigging, and hull, having many shots between wind and water.

It would be doing injustice to the merit of Mr. Tillinghast, second lieutenant, were I not to mention the able assistance I received from him during the remainder of the engagement, by his strict attention to his own division, and other departments ; and of the officers and crew generally, I am happy to add, their cool and determined conduct have my warmest approbation and applause.

As no muster-roll, that can be fully relied on, has come into my possession, I cannot exactly state the number of killed and wounded on board the *Boxer* ; but from information received from the officers of that vessel, it appears there were between 20 and 25 killed, and 14 wounded. Enclosed is a list of the killed and wounded on board the *Enterprise*.

I have the honor to be, &c.

EDWARD R. M'CALL, senior officer.

Isaac Hull, Esq. commanding naval-officer
on the eastern station.

List of killed and wounded on board the U. S. brig Enterprise, &c.

Killed—1 ordinary seaman.

Wounded—William Burrows, Esq. commander, *since dead* ; Kervin Waters, midshipman, *mortally* ; 1 carpenter's mate, *since dead* ; 2 quarter-masters, 1 boatswain's-mate, 5 seamen, and 1 marine.

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No. 46.

Sentence of the court-martial on the surviving officers and crew of the Boxer.

The court proceeded to inquire into all the particulars attending the capture of H. M.'s brig *Boxer* by the enemy, and

to try Lieutenant David M'Crery, her surviving officers and company, for the same; and having heard Lieutenant M'Crery's official letter and narrative of the action, and strictly examined the said lieutenant, and the surviving officers and company, produced to the court, and carefully investigated all the particulars attending the capture of H. M.'s brig Boxer, by the U. S. vessel of war Enterprise; and having very maturely and deliberately weighed and considered the whole and every part thereof, the court is of opinion that the capture of H. M. brig Boxer, by the U. S. vessel of war Enterprise, is to be attributed to a superiority in the enemy's force, principally in the number of men, as well as to a greater degree of skill in the direction of her fire, and the destructive effects of her first broadside.

The court is also of opinion, that the surviving officers and company (with the exception hereinafter made) appear to have done their utmost to capture the enemy's vessel, and to defend H. M. brig Boxer; and to have conducted themselves with courage, and a determination not to surrender while any prospect of success remained; and the court will therefore adjudge Lieutenant M'Crery, the surviving officers and company, to be acquitted, with the exception of Mr. Hugh James, quartermaster, doing duty as master's-mate, John Dod, James Jackson, and William Slattery, seamen; who have not appeared before the court, and have been stated to have deserted their quarters during the action; and through cowardice, negligence, or disaffection, to have withdrawn themselves from their duty in the engagement; and the said Lieutenant M'Crery, the surviving officers and company, are hereby acquitted accordingly, with the exception of the said Mr. Hugh James, John Dodd, James Jackson, and William Slattery.