

Visiting School Teachers

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School Teachers

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SECOND BAPTISM OF WAR

Centennial Reminiscence of the War of 1812.

CAUSES LEADING UP TO IT

Attack on the American Frigate Chesapeake and the Surrender—Suspended Commodore in Deadly Duel.

One hundred years ago on the day which we celebrated as the birthday of our flag, the American congress was considering an important message which had been sent to it by President Madison on the first day of June. There were many warm debates in congress that month, but the president's views were finally adopted, and on June 19 the United States was declared to be again at war with Great Britain.

The first reason for war which the president had given in his message was that British cruisers had been in the continued practice of violating the American flag upon the great highway of nations, and of seizing and carrying off persons sailing under it.

At this time the American flag, adopted during the first war with Great Britain, was about 35 years old. It was a flag of fifteen stars and fifteen stripes, for two new states had entered the union since the first design of thirteen stars and thirteen stripes was adopted, and by resolution of congress, not only two stars, but two stripes, had been added to the national standard.

fair prize practically put a stop to America's prosperous sea trade.

Serious Causes.

But there was a more serious cause of complaint against England than its violation of the neutrality rights of our flag. When American commerce increased so rapidly, a large number of seamen were needed and high wages paid. Consequently, many British sailors deserted their own ships and enlisted with the Americans. Pretending that they wished to search for such deserters, British officers claimed the right to board any ship they met, and once on deck, they took what men they chose and pressed them into the British service. During the eight years preceding the declaration of war nearly 1,000 men each year were taken from American boats by British officers.

Several of the men thus impressed even carried certificates of citizenship, although the American government claimed that such identification was unnecessary since "the colors that float from the masthead should be the credentials of our seamen."

Protests to the British government were of no avail, and it is not strange that the officers and men who had sworn to protect and uphold our flag did not submit quietly to repeated insults. Many serious conflicts took place on the high seas, the news of each succeeding encounter being received with growing indignation in America. Demand for war increased, and when, in 1807, the American frigate Chesapeake was obliged to haul down its flag and allow its men to be mustered by the captain of the British boat Leopard, the event caused more excitement than anything which had occurred since the battle of Lexington.

For three years British vessels had cruised up and down the American coast from Maine to Cape Henry, keeping the country in a state of partial blockade and annoying American vessels by all manner of petty insults. The favorite station was Chesapeake bay, and there, in the summer of 1806, a British squadron followed some French ships which had been driven in by a storm. During the year the English boats remained at anchor there, there were many desertions, and it was claimed by British officers that their old seamen openly paraded the streets of Norfolk under the protection of the American flag.

Insult Heeded.

In the spring of 1807 the American frigate Chesapeake was fitted out in the Washington navy yard for a cruise to the Mediterranean, where it had been

ordered as the flagship of Commodore Barron. In May the Chesapeake sailed down the Potomac, completed its preparations at Norfolk, and at 6 a. m. June 22, the wind being favorable, stood to sea. In Lynnhaven bay it passed two British men-o-war, their colors flying in friendly fashion, and a little later, as Commodore Barron wrote his report, they observed the Leopard get under way. About 4 o'clock in the afternoon the British boat came within hail, and one of its officers came on board with a message.

The message proved to be a letter from Captain Humphreys of the Leopard, enclosing an order from the admiral of the British fleet in America. By the terms of Admiral Berkeley's order, any British officer, in case of meeting the frigate Chesapeake, was required to board it and search for deserters from certain ships. Commodore Barron replied that he knew of no such men as were described, and that he had instructions never to permit the crew of his ship to be mustered by any other than his own officers. He added that it was his disposition to preserve peace and harmony, and he hoped his answer would prove satisfactory. If war was the object of the British commander this reply was eminently satisfactory, and the Leopard immediately showed signs of hostility.

In size and equipment the two boats were about equal, but the Chesapeake was totally unprepared for battle. Its crew of 355 men had been somewhat hastily enlisted, and as it had been planned to drill them on the way across the Atlantic, they were barely acquainted with their quarters. When the boat left Norfolk, the deck was still littered with furniture, baggage and uncoiled ropes.

Commodore Barron, watching the Leopard after his answer was received, saw that the tampions were out of its guns and ordered his captain, Mr. Gordon, to send the men quietly to their stations. So quickly did the British begin the attack that the gunner of the Chesapeake had not reached his magazines before the first shot was fired by the Leopard.

Unprepared for Attack.

When passing Mount Vernon on its way down the Potomac the Chesapeake had attempted to fire the customary salute, and it was then discovered that neither the cartridges nor sponges provided would fit its guns. This trouble had been remedied at Norfolk, but now, when battle was imminent, its guns were again silent. Before its old-fashioned guns could be discharged lighted matches or heated logheads must be prepared, and broadside followed broadside from the guns of the Leopard, while men and

boys crowded impatiently around the Chesapeake's magazine.

Finally Lieutenant Allen ran with a live coal from the fire in the cook's galley and managed to fire one gun as the flag was lowered. To expose the men longer with no chance of returning fire would have been murder. Already three men had been killed and eighteen wounded, while the condition of the Chesapeake proved that nearly all of the discharges from the Leopard's guns had done effective work.

Captain Humphreys claimed four men from the crew of the Chesapeake—Daniel Martin, William Ware, John Strachan and Jenkin Ratford. The first three were native Americans who had shipped in American vessels and been impressed by the brig Melampus. Commodore Barron, in a report issued at the Washington navy yard, repeats the story of their escape from the Melampus.

Some time in February, 1807, there was an entertainment on board the Melampus, lying then in Hampton roads. "All the British boats," he writes, "except the captain's gig, being hoisted in, themselves and two other men, availed themselves of a moment to seize the gig and row off; that, as soon as they had got into the boat, they were hailed to know what they were going to do; replied they were going ashore; a brisk fire of musketry instantly commenced from the ship; that, in defiance of balls and the hazard of their lives, they continued to pull, and finally effected their escape to land, namely, Lovell's point; that they then carefully hauled up the boat on the beach, placed the oars in the boat, gave three cheers and moved up the country."

Two of the men were familiar with the neighborhood. John Strachan having been born on the eastern shores of Maryland, Queen Anne county, while William Ware was born on Pipe creek, Frederick county. Ware had driven a wagon for several years between Hagerstown and Baltimore, and was well known. Daniel Martin was colored and a native of Massachusetts.

Saved from Blame.

Since all three of these men were unmistakably Americans who had been impressed by an English boat, it was the discovery of the fourth man, Jenkin Ratford, who alone, Adams says, "saved Captain Humphreys from the blame of committing an outrage not only lawless, but purposeless." Ratford proved to be an Englishman who had enlisted under an assumed name, and the fact that he was one of the deserters demanded by the British ship Halifax was unknown to Barron. Captain Humphreys refused to regard the Chesapeake as a prize, and the half-disabled frigate, its flag gone, made its way back to Hampton Roads.

All over the country craze was worn and indignation meetings were held. Newspapers declared "that war will probably take place, and it is inevitable unless the government of Great Britain should make ample return for the attack

made upon our frigate the Chesapeake.

Reparation was long in coming, although the British ministry disavowed Admiral Berkeley's act and recalled him from his station in America. Ratford, the English deserter, was hanged in August, 1807, from the yardarm of his own ship, the Halifax. Nearly five years later, and just before war was declared, two of the American sailors taken were returned to the deck of the Chesapeake. The third had died in prison, but money compensation was offered his family.

When the Chesapeake dragged itself back to harbor after the encounter with the Leopard, the indignation of America was not only turned against the British, but Commodore Barron was openly abused. A court-martial was held on board the humiliated frigate, and Barron, who had been brought up in the service of the navy, and whose father had been commander-in-chief of the Virginia navy during the revolution, was accused of negligence and cowardice. He was acquitted on all counts but one, his judges deciding that he should have prepared for action upon his first reading of Captain Humphreys's message.

Disappointment and a Duel.

Barron was suspended from active service for five years, and never recovered from the shadow of that disgrace. Embittered and disappointed, twenty years after the affair of the Chesapeake, he challenged Stephen Decatur, who had been one of his judges at the court-martial, and always remained his outspoken critic. The story of the duel at Bladensburg, where Decatur was killed, is well known, Barron himself being severely wounded. Until the time of his death, in 1801, he was never assigned to sea duty.

The unfortunate Chesapeake was always classed as an unlucky ship, and even Captain Lawrence when assigned to it begged for another command. It proved an ill omen ship for him, and after the terrible conflict with the Shannon, in 1813, another June anniversary, the Chesapeake once more surrendered to the British. This time the prize was not refused, and the American frigate was taken to England, where, in 1820, its timbers were sold to John Prior, a miller.

The Chesapeake's flag, kept for many years by the family of the British ensign who hauled it down, was finally sold at auction and purchased by William Waldorf Astor, Mr. Astor, less mindful of the honor of the flag than those who fought to defend it a hundred years ago, presented his purchase to the British naval institute.—Washington Star.

AD BRIEFS

Complete.
"Good morning, sir. Can I sell you the latest atlas?"
"You surely cannot. I bought a new one last spring."
"All, sir, but sure is up to the hour. We can't nothing, sir. Our book is absolutely

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Cowman's Cafe Moderately Priced Restaurant Seventeenth and Douglas Streets Special Sale on GRAPE JUICE All This Week 7 quarts....\$2.25 7 pints.....\$1.25

A Big Difference.
"Marriage makes a big difference," she sighed.
"What, married only two weeks and disappointed? What's the trouble?"
"Oh, there isn't any great trouble. But I've noticed that whenever I sit on George's lap now his foot goes to sleep much quicker than it used to."—Detroit Free Press.

complete, being the only atlas ever sent out that included the field of Armageddon and the exact site of an Anasias club!"
"All right. Gimme a copy."—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

Nuts to Crack.
It is better to start a good dinner with an appetite than with an appetizer.
There are times when every man makes a fool of himself, but some few of us get over it.
Lots of people are contented because they don't know any better.
It is just as well to insure your bridges before you burn them behind you.
A black cat may bring good luck, but you can't convince the mouse of the truth of this superstition.
When a man marries he receives a life sentence, with nothing off for good behavior.
Intuition is merely a remarkable faculty possessed by a good guesser.
The carpenter, at least, is one man who hasn't time to have his nails manicured.—New York Times.

Equal to the Occasion.
"We insist," said the suffragist speaker, her eyes flashing like fire, "that we women have a natural and inalienable right to say who shall govern us, as men have."
"Pooh! Pooh!" exclaimed a rough-looking man in the audience.
"Which only shows," rejoined the suffragist, her stern features softening into a smile, "how true the scriptures are in saying that the power we have always with us."—Chicago Tribune.