

In Unrecorded Naval Battle British "Dreadnought" Vanquished Three French and Two American Vessels

FOR more than a century and a quarter it has generally been accepted by historians that the surrender of Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in October, 1781, terminated the important military operations in the struggle for American independence, but recent researches have brought to light a squadron action off the Spanish port of Ferrol in which two American war ships took part on December 12, 1782, or more than two years after the surrender at Yorktown. In no American records, official or historical, has any mention ever been made of this naval battle of the Revolution.

In many respects the battle of Ferrol rivals the extraordinary performance of John Paul Jones, when he, in command of the Bonhomme Richard, fought the English frigate Serapis off Flamborough Head, on the east coast of England, September 23, 1779, and illustrates the value of the "dreadnaughts" of those days. In both instances it was a moonlight action, the combined forces of the Bonhomme Richard and the Serapis being ninety-two guns and six hundred and twenty-four men, while the combined American, English and French forces in the battle off Ferrol was one hundred and eighty cannon and eight hundred and ninety-seven men.

The discovery of this important action was brought about by the persistent following up of a clue given at a private sale of old books and engravings held some time ago in London, England. Among the engravings was one which represented the British forty-four gun frigate Mediator, Captain James Luttrell, R. N., attacking the combined American and French squadrons off the bold headlands forming the harbor of Ferrol. The engraving, which is a superb specimen of the art, was made by Mr. R. Pollard from a painting made more than a century ago by D. Serres, Esq., fellow of the Royal Academy and "Marine Painter to His Majesty."

It was customary toward the close of the Revolution for American and French war ships to cruise in company, and, when attacked by their common foe, the English, to join forces for mutual defence. Evidently this was the case in the newly discovered naval battle off Ferrol. The two American vessels were the twenty-four gun ship Alexander, commissioned as a privateer by the State of New York, commanded by Captain Gregory, and manned by 162 men, and the fourteen gun brig Amiable Eunice, commissioned as a privateer by the State of Massachusetts, commanded by Captain W. Pearson and manned by seventy men.

Cruising in company with the Alexander and Amiable Eunice were the French war ships L'Eugene, Captain Le Baudin, carrying thirty-six guns and 138 men; the corvette Dauphin Royal, carrying 28 guns and 120 men, and the frigate Menagerie, Captain de Toligne, carrying or pierced for thirty-four guns and manned by 212 men, making the total force of the allied American-French



The Representation of the Honorable Ship MEDIATOR, 44 Guns, Commanded by the Honorable CAPT. JAMES LUTTRELL, R. N., attacking the combined American and French squadrons off the bold headlands forming the harbor of Ferrol, on the 12th Decr. 1782. Engraved by R. POLLARD, from a painting by D. SERRES, Esq., fellow of the Royal Academy, and "Marine Painter to His Majesty." The original painting is in the possession of the Honorable Captain Luttrell, R. N., at the Naval Yard, Portsmouth.

A Recently Discovered Naval Battle of the American Revolution. Courtesy of Navy Dept. Records.

squadrons 156 guns and 637 men. According to the French records, however, the Menagerie was armed "en flûte," which means that she had been transformed into a transport, with her guns taken out so as to make room for the transportation of troops. But even with the Menagerie's guns eliminated, the allied squadron had a force greatly superior to the attacking English. The Mediator was a formidable craft for her day, and, singly, was superior to any of her antagonists. Captain Luttrell, her commander, availed himself to the utmost

of his great advantage in having a compact force, for he speedily broke through the hostile line of battle, and by attacking his foes separately won a brilliant victory, notwithstanding the fact that his ship carried only forty-four guns. The Americans and French had the distinct advantage of not being able to act in complete harmony—due, no doubt, to the old time difficulty of understanding each other's language and signals.

Just as dawn was beginning to break December 12, 1782, when the Mediator was cruising in the Bay of Biscay, her lookouts reported two sails directly ahead, and soon afterward three other strangers.

On making the Mediator out to be an English war ship the American and French war ships immediately shortened sail, formed in line of battle and awaited the attack. The line was headed by L'Eugene, having the Amiable Eunice, Alexander and Dauphin Royal in the order named, Captain Le Baudin of L'Eugene acting as commodore of the allied squadrons.

Having made out the force of his antagonists and their disposition for defence, Captain Luttrell made straight for the centre of the American-French line of battle. This naturally exposed his ship to a raking fire from the whole line of battle. For fully half an hour the Mediator endured this exposure, rounding occasionally so as to deliver her broad side in return. Fortunately for the Englishmen, however, the Americans and French fired too high, scarcely striking the Mediator's hull once, but severely injuring her masts and rigging.

called squadron, for the British records state that the "villain vessel" had "spent an hour and a half in raking the Alexander in the Mediator. Captain Luttrell gave chase to the remaining vessels, whereupon they separated and took up different courses to escape."

Striking out the Menagerie, Captain Luttrell ordered her to sail for the harbor of Ferrol. A running fight, which was greatly protracted by the darkness of the night, was maintained between the Mediator and the Menagerie until dawn closed that night, when the Frenchman surrendered.

On the following morning, December 13, he discovered the Amiable Eunice and the Dauphin Royal in the offing endeavoring to gain the protection of the coast, having been rain driven most of the night, none of the vessels had made much headway. Having placed a number of his own men aboard the Menagerie and Alexander he prize crew, Captain Luttrell found that none but only 100 of his crew left with which to guard 450 American and French prisoners. He accordingly gave over further thought of chasing the fugitive craft and made sail for England. That the Americans in the Amiable Eunice had made a good escape is shown by the fact that their craft was perfectly dismantled before the close of the battle.

Captain Gregory, of the Alexander, hatched a contrivance to capture the Mediator almost at once as that frigate shaped her course for England. The conditions were most favorable, for the frigate's complement had been reduced to one hundred and ninety men and the American and French prisoners aboard numbered three hundred and forty.

Captain Gregory had laid his plans with remarkable skill. By some means not revealed in the unrecorded records he managed to have the hatchway gratings—the usual means of entering the hatchways which led to the prisoners' quarters below—secreted, and on the discharge of the cannon at midnight of December 14 the prisoners were to rush up from the deck below, raise the gratings, "take it on fire," and in the confusion of confusion overpower the officers and crew. Gregory himself, as being the commander of the captured Alexander, was not confined with the other prisoners, but had a cut to himself on the main gun deck.

How well this skillfully managed plan worked is told in the British official records as follows:—"On the night of December 14 Captain Luttrell was alarmed by a violent explosion and the cry of fire. Gregory had fired one of the lower deck guns as a signal in a plot for the prisoners to rise and take the Mediator. Captain Luttrell immediately sent what remained of his crew to quarters and placed armed sentries over the hatchways. It was then found that the gratings had mysteriously disappeared. To remedy this defect some iron bars were hastily procured and were lashed over the hatchways, thus preventing the prisoners from gaining the deck. This desperate scheme was perpetrated without bloodshed. Upon examination some powder and a pistol were found in Gregory's cot, which, with other corroborative circumstances, led to prove that he was the principal conspirator. Gregory and some others were confined in irons during the remainder of the passage to England."

NAVY LEAGUE FOR A BIG NAVY AS AN INSURANCE AGAINST WAR

Relative Strength of Naval Powers in Capital Ships Built and Authorized.

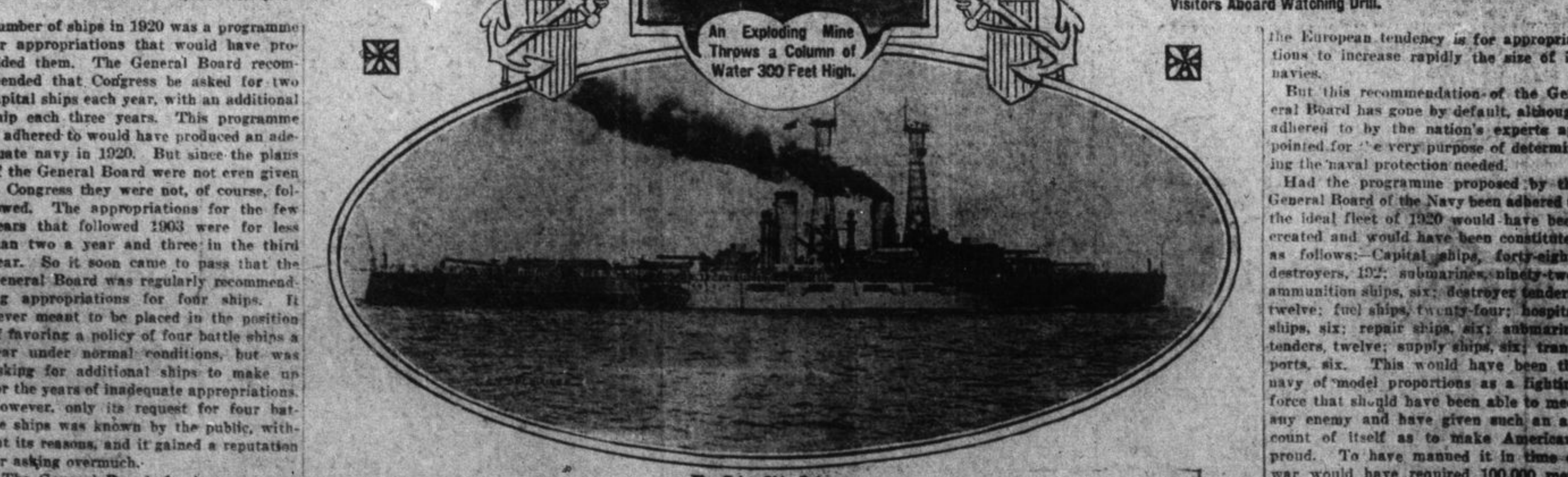
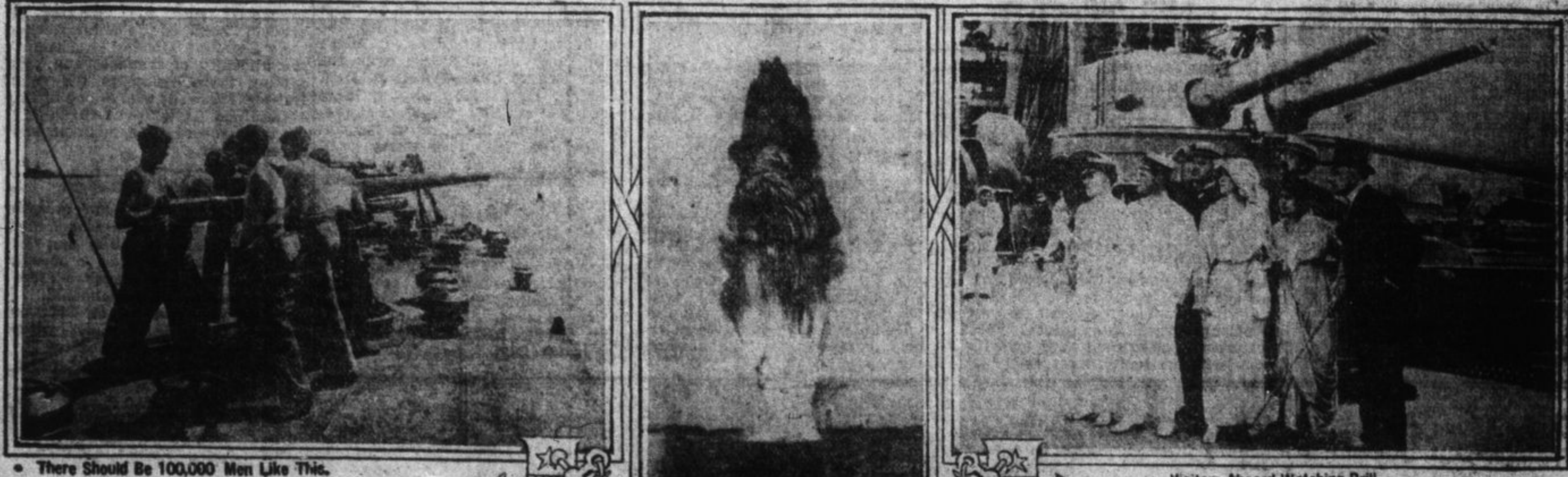
	1918. Authorized.	Total.
England	27	42
Germany	17	26
United States	7	12
Russia	0	11
France	2	9
Japan	3	10
Italy	2	7

HOW many battle ships does the United States need? The General Board of the Navy was appointed as a board of experts to answer this question. They declare that to maintain American policies and protect the nation the United States should possess by 1920 forty-eight first class battle ships, with the necessary auxiliary vessels of a well balanced navy.

This policy was laid down ten years ago by the nation's official advisers and, accompanied with full explanation, recommended to the Navy Department. Similar recommendations have been decided on unanimously by successive General Boards and have been made to successive Secretaries of the Navy each year since 1910.

The Naval Board as at present constituted is a notable body. It includes the Admiral of the Navy, George Dewey, ranking officer of the United States Navy; Rear Admiral C. E. Vreeland; Rear Admiral W. H. Southerland; Rear Admiral Bradley M. Fiske and Rear Admiral A. M. Knight. All of these men are of the highest rank, men of long and noted service, and the latter is the president of the Navy War College. In addition to these are five captains, all men who have won for themselves places of distinction. They are Captains H. E. Winterhalter, Captain T. S. Rodgers, Captain John Hood and Captains W. R. Shoemaker.

Together with the laying down of a policy that would result in the desired



The Prize Ship Delaware.

number of ships in 1920 was a programme for appropriations that would have provided them. The General Board recommended that Congress be asked for two capital ships each year, with an additional ship each three years. This programme if adhered to would have produced an adequate navy in 1920. But since the plans of the General Board were not even given to Congress they were not, of course, followed. The appropriations for the few years that followed 1902 were for less than two a year and three in the third year. So it soon came to pass that the General Board was regularly recommending appropriations for four ships. It never meant to be placed in the position of favoring a policy of four battle ships a year under normal conditions, but was asking for additional ships to make up for the years of inadequate appropriations. However, only its request for four battle ships was known by the public, without its reasons, and it gained a reputation for asking overmuch.

The General Board, for instance, asks for four battle ships this year. It does so because three happens to be an emergency. Four first class ships are ready for re-

placement. These are the Indiana, the Massachusetts, the Oregon and the Iowa, the first authorized in 1890 and the

last in 1892. Unless provision is made for four ships the navy will have fewer capital ships next year than last. The

European tendency is for appropriations to increase rapidly the size of its navies.

But this recommendation of the General Board has gone by default, although adhered to by the nation's experts appointed for the very purpose of determining the naval protection needed.

Had the programme proposed by the General Board of the Navy been adhered to the ideal fleet of 1920 would have been created and would have been constituted as follows:—Capital ships, forty-eight; destroyers, 122; submarines, ninety-two; ammunition ships, six; destroyer tenders, twelve; fuel ships, twenty-four; hospital ships, six; repair ships, six; submarine tenders, twelve; supply ships, six; transports, six. This would have been the navy of model proportions as a fighting force that should have been able to meet any enemy and have given such an account of itself as to make Americans proud. To have manned it in time of war would have required 100,000 men. The General Board has also definite and comprehensive plans of how an adequate force of trained men may be kept ready for an emergency, how naval officers

should be advanced to command rank at an age sufficiently young to get experience in that rank, and many other vital needs of the navy that need fitting legislation.

The Navy League vouches for the foregoing statements.

The organization and growth of the Navy League came about from a conviction on the part of certain citizens that the welfare of the country demanded that the American people should take an active interest in the navy. From the start naval officers have not been permitted to assume leadership or hold office in the organization.

The League is supported by membership fees and subscriptions from donors. From these sources it has an income of about \$10,000 a year, maintains an office in Washington, holds meetings and conventions, has a speaking bureau, and circulates a vast amount of printed matter.

Among the booklets published by the League that have attracted wide attention is a pamphlet which quotes from President Wilson's "History of the American People" the statement that the War of 1812 was a "war of arms brought on by a programme of peace." It brings out that although the American people had in the field during the War of 1812 238,000 untrained men, the British, with but 16,500 trained soldiers (the size of their force in 1814), were able to march to Washington and burn the Capitol.

The League also refers to the conditions prevailing in the year 1890, ten years before the civil war, when another group of would-be peace makers, whose programme was disarmament, went to the extreme of introducing in Congress a bill to entirely abolish the navy.

The navy is the only form of insurance against war. The cost of the navy has been thirty per cent less than the cost of pensions since the Revolution.

The navy is a splendid national public school—the modern battle ship is a perfect manual training establishment. Estimated men in the navy are trained to be patriotic and to respect the law; they are developed physically and are employed in a dozen useful trades which improve them as men and prepare them all the better for civil pursuits.