

LETTER
TO
LORD VISCOUNT MELVILLE,
RESPECTING
THE REAL CAUSES OF
The Defeat
OF
THE ENGLISH FLOTILLA
ON
THE LAKE ERIE;
AND POINTING OUT THE MEANS OF SECURITY
AGAINST SUCH DISASTERS IN FUTURE.

BY SIR SAMUEL BENTHAM, K.S.G.
FORMERLY BRIGADIER GENERAL IN THE RUSSIAN SERVICE,
AFTERWARDS INSPECTOR GENERAL OF NAVAL WORKS,
AND LATELY A COMMISSIONER OF HIS MAJESTY'S NAVY,
WITH THE DISTINCT DUTY OF CIVIL ARCHITECT AND
ENGINEER OF THE NAVY.

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1814,

*Berry Lodge, near Gosport,
26th Feb. 1814.*

MY LORD,

MY attention having been accidentally turned to the official Reports published in the Second Supplement to the London Gazette of the 8th inst. relative to the late disastrous action between the British and American Squadrons on Lake Erie, and presuming that your Lordship will be disposed to give an ear to any representations which may serve to point out the means of securing our Naval Armaments from such signal discomfitures in future, I feel it as a duty incumbent on me to offer to your Lordship's consideration the observations which presented themselves to me, on a close examination of the particulars detailed in the Reports of that Action, confident that by viewing it in the light in which these observations will place it, your Lordship will at any rate see reason to attribute our defeat to causes different from those assigned in the Reports.

On the occasion of offering my ideas on this subject, I would beg your Lordship to bear in mind, that in the early part of my life, whilst engaged in the Russian service, I was entrusted

with the sole contrivance and direction of the equipping, arming, and manning, as well as afterwards, in a great degree, with the employment of a naval force at the mouth of the Dnieper, where the only vessels I had to operate upon were much *inferior* in *size*, in *construction*, and in *capability*, to those employed in the action in question on Lake Erie; that, to *man* this Russian flotilla, we had, with the exception of half a dozen seamen, none other than *soldiers* and *landsmen*, scarcely any of whom had *ever fired a gun* before the attack on the enemy began; and that several of the vessels were even *commanded* by officers of the *land* service, totally unacquainted with naval affairs. It was, nevertheless, by means of a flotilla so formed, so manned, and so commanded, that not only the enemy's flotilla (which had been looked upon as in itself of very superior force to our's) was *defeated*; but our success was so great, that we moreover actually *took* from the enemy one *ship of the line*, and *burnt seven* more. —On reflecting on the causes to which this very signal success should be attributed, although (as may be supposed) the exertions of those who contributed to it, did not go unrewarded, and although as to myself on this occasion, I received from her Imperial Majesty very honorable military distinctions,—one for

each of the three successive actions by which this victory was obtained,—I could not but feel, that in *point of fact*, the success had resulted far more from the manner in which that Flotille was *armed*,* than from any very extraordinary skill or bravery on the part of the combatants.

On reference to Captain Barclay's and the other official Reports, it will be seen, that to account for the discomfiture of the British Squadron on Lake Erie, there is stated to have been on the British side, from the first, a deficiency of *skilful* seamen; and it is implied, that a sufficiency of nautical *skill* could not be expected in the Officers to whom the command of the several vessels ultimately devolved, some of them being of the *land* service; nevertheless, as the action was begun under the direction of very experienced *naval* Officers, as the mode of attack was, no doubt, pre-arranged by these Officers, it being stated, that "the line was formed according to a *given plan*," and as no bad weather or other circumstance is mentioned, such as appears to have

* The vessels, of which the Flotille was composed, were chiefly river-barges and ships' long-boats, the largest, though carrying eight 36-pounder long guns, were no more than 77 feet long and 22 feet 6 inches broad; the smallest carried a 49-pounder howitzer.

required any nautical skill during the continuation of the action, beyond what the British seamen, distributed in the several vessels, might be expected to have afforded,—as the military Officers are stated to have “behaved in a manner which excited” Captain Barclay’s “warmest admiration,” and the troops to have “behaved with a calmness and courage worthy of a more fortunate issue to their exertions,” there seems reason to attribute the disastrous result of this action much rather to the extraordinarily destructive powers of the enemy’s ordnance, than to deficiency of skill, any more than of zeal and bravery in the surviving combatants; indeed the terrible effects of the enemy’s guns were so great, that the number of killed and disabled amounted to 135, including all the Commanders and their Seconds; and our two principal vessels, the *Detroit* and the *Queen Charlotte*, appear, as stated by Captain Barclay, to have been fought till they were “*perfect wrecks* ;” while, on the other hand, although no account is given of the loss of lives on the side of the enemy, there seems much reason to infer that it could not have been nearly so great as on our’s: and as to their vessels, the *Lawrence* indeed, as it appears that she had struck, may be supposed to have been much injured; but the enemy’s “second largest Vessel, the *Niagara*,” is expressly stated to

have been at that time “perfectly fresh;” and it farther appears, from the General Order of Adjutant General Baynes, dated Montreal, Nov. 24, 1813, that the enemy’s “numerous “*gun-boats*, which had proved the greatest “source of annoyance during the action, *were* “*all uninjured.*”

After this view of the comparative degree of injury done to the two Squadrons, and keeping in mind the encomiums bestowed on the zealous exertions of all employed in this disastrous conflict, the need immediately presents itself of bringing under examination the *efficiency* of the *weapons* with which the combatants on each side had been respectively furnished.

On this subject, the Reports state very decidedly, that there was a comparative deficiency on our side in regard to so much of the Ordnance as consisted of *long* guns; while, on the other hand, in regard to so much of the force as was made up of carronades, by the stress laid on the advantage which accrued to the enemy from a change of wind, which enabled them to keep at such a *distance* as prevented our *carronades* from “having much effect;” it seems to have been imagined that, in as far as depended on carronades, we were, in the opinion of the Commander, if not superior, at least nearly

on a par with the enemy. On reference, however, to the details given by Captain Barclay respecting the ordnance with which each vessel on both sides was armed,* it will be seen that, in regard to *long* guns, the advantage was with *us*; I do not mean in as far as depends on the *number* of such guns only, for that alone would afford very insufficient grounds to judge on, but in regard to the far more essential particular of the total *weight of shot* which, at each discharge of the guns of this description, they were capable of throwing. On board the American Squadron, the number of long guns was 16, and the total *weight of shot* they were capable of throwing at one discharge amounted to no more than 312^{lbs.}; whereas the number of long guns mounted on board *our* vessels being 35, the weight of shot which *our* long guns were capable of throwing at each discharge, may be seen to have amounted to the *greater weight* of 335^{lbs.}. On the contrary, on making a similar comparison in respect of the *carro-nades* on each side, it will be seen that the number of this species of ordnance on board the American vessels was 38, and the weight of shot capable of being thrown by them, at each discharge, amounted to so much as 1216^{lbs.}; while, on board *our* vessels, we had

* See Appendix, page 36.

but 28 carronades, and the weight of shot thrown by them was no more than 522^{lbs.}; hence it is very evident, that in as far as depended on the nature of the guns on board each Squadron, as being some adapted to close action, some to more distant firing, the enemy so far from having had the greatest advantage over us whilst they kept at such a distance as prevented carronades from having much effect, were, in point of fact, whilst at that great distance, really *inferior* to us; but, on the contrary, whilst the Squadrons were in *close* action, that is, *within* the undoubted range of a *carronade*, the Americans were *then*, indeed, of nearly *double our force*.

If then the disastrous result of this action should occasion a determination to take some steps towards the improvement of the mode of arming our vessels of war, and if, with a view to such improvement, no other question were to be brought forward, than the one to which I have known the attention to have been often confined on such occasions, namely, whether the preference should, in future, be given more generally to *long* guns or to carronades, it is evident, from the above comparison, notwithstanding the representations of the Officers who have reported on this engagement, that the deplorable result of it affords far better reason for

deciding on the more extensive use of carro-nades, than for the employment, in preference, of a greater number of long guns. I should hope, however,—and it is this alone that could induce me to address myself on such an occasion to your Lordship, or could justify me for doing so,—I should hope an event like this, a defeat by an enemy, so contemptible in regard to his resources for the equipment or maintenance of a naval force, may *at length* induce a closer investigation than has, as yet, been attempted, of the *circumstances on which the efficiency of naval armaments really depends*; an investigation, the need of which I cannot forbear taking this opportunity of representing to your Lordship, although my representations of the same kind to your Lordship's predecessors have, from various circumstances, been attended with but little success.

The guns used on board ship for Naval Warfare, together with the carriages, and manner in which they are mounted, remain nearly the same, and comprehend nearly the same varieties as to their form, and the size of shot they are adapted to throw, as those which had been from time to time introduced in the land service, before (as it may be said) any regular Navy existed; and the preparation of ordnance for the use of the Navy has been

confided to the same distinct department, the duty of which is to direct the preparation of ordnance for the land service, and the actual employment of it in the field, a department in which it is not professed that any knowledge of Naval concerns is to be found—the consequences of which arrangement, as may well be expected, has been, that no material improvement has been adopted in regard to Naval ordnance, excepting that some private individuals, manufacturers of guns, succeeded 30 or 40 years ago in effecting the introduction of a species of ordnance under the denomination of carronades, which, though very different from the guns looked upon as of the regular establishment, have been found from experience to have been in many respects very advantageous.—As to any attempt at general improvement, no regular investigation has been instituted, even so much as to ascertain the comparative efficiency of the several varieties of Naval ordnance already in use, or of the several descriptions of shot they are capable of throwing—no attempt has been made to ascertain the weight of shot which may be discharged from a gun of each description in a given time, according to the different modes of working and mounting them—none, to ascertain the weight which a gun should have, to render it strong enough to throw a given weight of

shot to a required distance—a knowledge, without which no vessel intended to float, and to be navigated, can be armed to that full extent of which it is susceptible.

In consequence of such a deficiency of the requisite knowledge, and of the absence of all perception of the need of it, it seems as if, in the allotment of ordnance of the different kinds in use, to the different ships and vessels prepared for naval warfare, the only consideration generally attended to, is the very superficial one of varying the size of it according to the size of the vessels; introducing at the same time several varieties of ordnance on board the same vessel, for the purpose, it would seem, of taking the chance that at least some among the several, might happen to be of the kind suitable to the service for which they may come to be used, disregarding the deficiency of force which must necessarily result from the comparative unfitness of the other varieties.

It is true, that in regard to the defects of our naval armaments, our enemies in general seem to have as yet paid little more attention to this subject than ourselves; so that, could we be assured that they would continue to employ against us no weapons better adapted to destruction than those that we employ against them, it might

perhaps, by many, be deemed prudent not to make any change in this respect, but to leave the result of our contests to depend as much as possible on the personal skill and bravery of our combatants, whereby we might trust with confidence to the continuation of that brilliant success, which has generally attended our naval warfare ; but the deplorable failure of success, which gave rise to these observations, seems, without adverting to any other, to show that, in regard to the Americans, our expectations cannot be so flattering, since, however contemptible they are in comparison to us, in respect of their resources for naval warfare, our contests with them have shown how dangerous it is to rely on our enemies doing nothing more than keep pace with us, in the improvement of the implements of warfare ; urged as they are to minute attention to the efficiency of the means they employ by the need of economy, and free as they are from the impediments and clogs arising from an ill grounded though established practice, and from a system of management ill suited to the correction of it, it may well be apprehended that in their attempts at erecting a naval force, the efficiency of their warlike apparatus should be more distinctly kept in view, than it has been with us ; and although they do not appear as yet to have entered into any close investigation which might have suggested the

introduction of new species of guns, they have at least shown, that in the selection of them, far from regulating the size of the gun to that of the vessel, they are fully sensible of the great advantage to be derived from employing guns of the largest size already in use, on board the smallest vessels capable of bearing their weight. They seem to have advanced so far at least, as to have considered that, taking for example a 24 pounder, of whatever description, equal as it evidently is to four 6 pounders, in regard to the weight of shot thrown at each discharge, the 24 pounder, when compared to four 6 pounders, in point of economy, costs less, weighs less, occupies less space, and requires fewer hands to work it, than the four 6 pounders ; if compared, in point of efficiency, the 24 pounder will be seen to possess the very important advantage of throwing the whole weight of 24^{lbs.} of shot in one mass, thereby, besides attaining an object at a greater distance, producing, in some cases, indubitably a much more destructive effect, while at the same time, in regard to the occasional modification of its effect, the 24 pounder is not only capable of throwing the 24^{lb.} weight of shot divided into four shot of 6^{lbs.} each, as it would be thrown by the four 6 pounders, but divided likewise into any such number of parts as may be deemed most advisable, as in the form of grape or cannister shot.

On reference to the account given of the ordnance used on both sides in the action in question, it will be seen that, whilst on board one of our vessels carrying ten guns, including carronades, there were four different varieties in regard to the shot they were adapted to throw; and whilst the total weight of shot thrown at a discharge of six of these guns, being all that were long guns, amounted only to 32^{lbs.}; the same weight of shot was thrown by the enemy by means of a *single* long gun, on board one of the *smallest* of their vessels. Indeed, on examination of the reports of this action, it will be seen that, besides the regret expressed at the supposed superiority of the enemy in respect of the length of their guns (a supposition which I have shown to have been ill-founded) their superiority on account of the size of their shot, seems also to have been felt, at least in regard to those thrown by the long guns, although their superiority in regard to the size of the shot thrown by their carronades, where it was really much greater, does not seem to have been noticed. But, independently of any difference in effective force, to be accounted for from this difference in the length of the guns, and in the size as well as weight of shot they are capable of throwing at each discharge, it will be evident to your Lordship, that the destructive power of ordnance must very materially

depend on the *number* of discharges in a given time, as well as on the facility with which the gun may be pointed against the object to be aimed at; operations which evidently depend on the manner in which the guns are mounted. Captain Barclay, though he does not speak distinctly of the advantages the enemy derived from the manner in which their guns were mounted, notices, however, in this respect, that on board most of the American squadron, the carronades, as well as the long guns, were “*all on pivots.*” Whether or not by this difference in the mode of mounting, the enemy obtained the advantage of being able to turn the whole of their guns at the same time against our squadron, while on board our vessels, the guns being mounted, as usual, so as only to be capable of being fired, some on one side, some on the other, some at the head, others at the stern, we could employ comparatively very few of our guns at the same time against them, probably, in some cases, not more than a third, in point of efficiency; or whether or not the guns of the enemy, fixed, as they are reported to have been, so as to turn on pivots, were, at the same time, prevented from recoil, whereby, besides other advantages, they might have been fired twice as fast as if, after each firing, they should, as usual, require to be drawn up again, before they could be fired, are particulars which can-

not be judged of without more accurate information than the Reports afford: what, however, the Reports indubitably show, is, that on board the greater part of the enemy's squadron, all the guns, carronades as well as long guns, were mounted in a manner *very different from ours*; and that it was the particular vessels in which they were so differently mounted, which contributed most decidedly to that carnage and destruction, by which the defeat of our squadron was effected.

Having thus been led to represent to your Lordship, the particulars afforded by the Reports of the disaster in question in a point of view very different from that in which they seem likely to have been looked upon by others, your Lordship may probably expect, that in regard to the *means of affording security against such discomfitures in future*, I should have to propose and urge the adoption of some new species of ordnance, or of some new mode of working guns, of my own invention: but if, whilst it was my express duty to consider matters of this nature, I found the persuasion that there was *no need for improvement* in the mode of arming our vessels of war, to be an insuperable obstacle to my endeavours, so that I could not effect even partially, the permanent intro-

duction of improved ordnance, more advantageous modes of mounting the kinds in use, or even the more efficient arming of our existing vessels of war, by the better arrangement of ordnance already employed, I could not surely, under the present circumstances, expect that any suggestions of mine of this nature, should now be attended with success: while on the other hand, impressed as I am with a conviction, that means of improving materially the mode of arming vessels of war, could not fail to present themselves to any one who, being in the habit of tracing physical effects to their causes, and who being placed in circumstances calculated to afford him sufficient motives for exertion and perseverance, should be furnished with the means of pursuing the requisite investigations, I see the less need of my offering any proposals of this nature. *The only measure*, therefore, I would propose on this occasion, a measure which I cannot forbear taking every opportunity of urging the adoption of, a measure, on the expediency of which I should suppose your Lordship may decide from your own judgment, without subjecting it to the opinion of those who cannot have an equal interest in the adoption of it, is the constituting it to be the distinct business of some officer, to see to the arming of all ships and vessels of war employed in His Majesty's service, and the mak-

ing him responsible in the first instance to your Lordship, and ultimately to the public, for the due execution of this most important branch of Naval concerns.

In proposing this measure, I would not be understood to recommend that any individual should be invested with authority to change the mode of arming our Navy at his own discretion, since the *ordering* any such change would of course remain with the Admiral. But what I should look upon as essential to the production of the benefit expected, is that the individual selected for this purpose, besides being charged with the pursuit of the investigation requisite to exhibit how far our ships *are or are not* armed in the best manner they are susceptible of, and besides being referred to for his opinion, and for the grounds of it, in regard to any change that may be proposed, should be required to continue to take cognizance of the manner in which all vessels of war are, or may be, directed to be armed, so that in the event of any evident impropriety being brought to light relative to this most essential branch of Naval concerns, *the blame should rest on this individual*, unless he should be able to shew that the impropriety resulted from circumstances over which he had no controul—while on the other hand, he should be assured, that credit or other remuneration

should be the consequence, where the improvements introduced by his means might appear to entitle him to it. Confident, as I am, of the great benefit the public service would derive from this measure, I would beg your Lordship to consider, whether if it had been adopted previously to the outfit of our Squadron on Lake Erie, it be conceivable that Vessels should have been fitted out for any warfare, armed as those were which composed that Squadron—the sad consequences of which inadequate mode of arming, (your Lordship will, I trust, allow) no skill or bravery of the combatants could possibly have averted.

I have the honor to be

Your Lordship's

Very obedient Servant,

SAM^L. BENTHAM.

P. S. I take the liberty of enclosing, for your Lordship's information, the copy of a letter of mine to the Earl of St. Vincent, which having been a private communication, is, I conclude, not to be found in office; and I should also have added copies of other letters on the same subject, but that as I am on the point of returning to Hampstead, they have unfortunately been sent thither with other papers.

LETTER

TO THE

EARL OF ST. VINCENT:

Sent enclosed with the preceding Letter.

MY LORD,

IN consequence of the permission given me, in the course of the conversation your Lordship honoured me with, a few days ago, I take the liberty of submitting some observations, which, though they relate almost wholly to such points as your Lordship is well aware of, yet it seems no less necessary to state them on the present occasion, for the purpose of bringing them together under one general view.

Of the several branches of Naval Business, which the exercise of my duty has given me occasion to attend to, the one which I have been led to look upon, as susceptible of the most striking and efficacious improvement, is that, which concerns the mode of arming vessels of War, of all denominations.

That there should be comprised in His Majesty's Navy, a number of vessels of the same class and dimensions, to which the Establish-

ment of Officers and Men is the same, and from which the same services are required, and that some of these vessels should be armed with guns, throwing shot of only six pounds weight, while others of them carry an equal number of guns, throwing in the same time an equal number of shot of thirty-two pounds weight, evinces such a degree of inconsistency, as must afford conviction, that the practice of this most important branch of Naval concerns, cannot have been founded on any general rule.

To account for the use of such an inconsistent variety in the mode of arming ships, it must be observed, that the Guns, such as they have been long established, as proper to be used on board ships, are no other than Garrison Guns—the immensity of their weight was, in regard to the Land service, judged to produce no inconvenience, but what was outweighed by the advantage of their being thereby enabled to throw the shot to a somewhat greater distance; and the mode of mounting these large guns, on wheels, might well be found advantageous, in the Land service, considering that the platforms on which they are usually mounted, remain invariably either horizontal, or inclined in a way, calculated to obstruct the recoil of the gun, and to facilitate the working of it.

But, in regard to the Sea service, the circumstances under which the use of the guns is required, are very different; for on board the largest ships, the motion is sometimes so violent, as to make the management of heavy guns, mounted as they are on wheels, very difficult in bad weather, since the inclination of the decks is then liable to continual variation; besides which, the incapacity of ships to bear on all their decks, guns of the dimensions established, as proper to throw the shot, of the size the most efficient, has induced the necessity of introducing on board the same ships, Guns of different calibers, throwing shot of different weights from six pounds to two and forty.

The inconveniences attending the use of such heavy Guns, borrowed thus incongruously from the Land service, and the impossibility of mounting them on the upper decks, on board even the strongest ships, seem to have given rise to the proposal, and partial introduction of a much lighter kind of Gun, under the appellation of a Carronade, by means of which, small vessels have been armed, so as to throw large shot, with a force which, according to the experiments made with these guns, at the time of their invention, was deemed sufficient for sea service. After a continued experience of these Guns for many

years, the use of them has gradually, though very slowly, been extended, not only to all classes of vessels, but in some instances to the total exclusion of long guns; in consequence of which, many instances have occurred, in which, extraordinary success has attended vessels armed with no other guns than these; and it has frequently been asserted, that where carronades and long guns have been mounted on board the same vessel, the mischief done to an enemy's ship has been found, on examination after the capture of it, to have been effected chiefly by means of the carronades.

That the shot fired from a carronade with the small quantity of powder used for this species of ordnance, will not be thrown with so much force as from a long gun, of the same caliber, with a much greater quantity of powder, cannot but be acknowledged; but considering the practicability, when necessary, of using a greater charge of powder in carronades than the established one, the closeness at which sea engagements are fought, the little chance of a shot striking its object, from whatever gun it is thrown, if fired at a ship out of the range of a carronade, considering also that it is not a shot that strikes a ship with the greatest force, that does the greatest mischief, there seems

reason to believe that the opinion in favor of the use of carronades has been well founded.

For my part, from the experiments I have seen made, and from what experience I have had in actual service, I am of opinion that in many cases, by the introduction of carronades, howitzers, and mortars, and in general of pieces of artillery of light weight, instead of the established long guns, vessels of war may be made much more effective than they are at present. But the most advantageous weight of ordnance for sea service on board different classes of ships, the quantity of powder and the species of shot best adapted to the several purposes, cannot be ascertained without a course of experiments instituted expressly for this purpose.

Whenever your Lordship thinks proper to authorize the making any such course of experiments, I would take the liberty of submitting my ideas as to the mode of conducting them; but, in the mean time, the object of this letter is to propose for your consideration some alterations, the grounds for which seem already to have been laid by past experience, and which, if my conception of the subject be just, would produce an immediate and very great.

increase of naval force, independently of any addition to the number of ships. The amount of the increase may be judged of by the comparison I have made of the force of a seventy-four gun ship armed as at present, and armed as proposed.

In this proposal, the only considerable departure from established practice, consists in the mode of mounting carronades.

The many inconveniences which arise from the recoil of guns as it takes place on board ship, had induced me while in a foreign service (where I had sufficient authority in the several departments) to mount some of the largest pieces of artillery on board vessels, as small even as long-boats, and fixed so as to admit of no recoil but what arose from the yielding of the vessel itself; the success in actual service which attended the mode of arming that I had adopted on that occasion, was such as impressed my mind with the strongest conviction of its efficacy.

Since I have been employed at home, I have so far succeeded in my endeavours, as to have caused the guns to be mounted on this same principle on board the six vessels that have

been built according to my plans, but I must confess that the difficulties which I met with in the introduction of this single invention, with regard to the arming of ships, notwithstanding it is an express part of my duty to consider of all matters relative to the improvement of the arming of His Majesty's fleets, have prevented my giving that degree of perfection to the invention, which I am persuaded the subject admits of.

For an account of the advantages that have been already experienced of this mode of mounting guns, I would beg to refer your Lordship to my Official Letters on the subject, and to the testimonies furnished by the officers who have experienced the advantages.

A statement of the expedients herein alluded to, is contained in the paper herewith inclosed.

I have the honor to be,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient Servant,

SAM^L. BENTHAM.

Feb. 22, 1801.

EXPEDIENTS PROPOSED

FOR THE

EFFECTING AN IMMEDIATE INCREASE

OF THE

NAVAL FORCE OF THE COUNTRY,

INDEPENDENT OF ANY INCREASE IN THE NUMBER
OF VESSELS OF WAR.

1. To fit permanent broad Gangways, to all the Ships of the Line and Frigates now in Port ; as also to all others in actual service, whenever they come into Port, so as to afford the opportunity.

2. To take away, as soon as circumstances will admit of it, the long Guns from the upper Decks of two-decked Ships, particularly from those Ships in which there is any deficiency of strength, as also from the middle deck of three-decked Ships : in their room to mount Carronades in the usual way ; and on the Quarter Decks, Gangways, and Forecastles, to mount Carronades on the Non-recoil principle, all of

them of the same caliber as the long Guns now used on the lower Decks.

3. To take out all the long Guns less than 18-pounders from Frigates and Sloops, and to mount 32-pounder Carronades on the Non-recoil principle in their stead.

4. If in consequence of immediate directions given to the Board of Ordnance, for the preparing the requisite number of Carronades, that Department cannot find the means of keeping pace with the Dock Yards in the preparation for this mode of arming, in that case to employ as many as may be necessary of the Artificers of Deptford and Woolwich Dock Yards, in making Carriages for Carronades, rather than that this mode of encreasing the Effective Force of the present Ships, so far as it may be deemed proper to extend it, should be delayed for the purpose of building or repairing additional Ships.

It must also be observed, that this mode of Arming Ships, at the same time, that it would afford so great an increase of warlike Force, wherever it may be introduced, would occasion so much less strain to the structure of the Ships themselves, that many Ships might be brought

into immediate use, if armed in this manner, although they would be incapable of bearing the weight of the Guns necessary to arm them according to the usual mode.

The comparison between a 74-gun ship, armed in the manner here proposed, and one armed in the usual way, would stand as follows :

On board a 74-gun ship, armed as at present, there would be fired from one side:

	Number of Shot.	Weight of Shot.	Number of Men.
From the 32-pounders on the Lower Gun-deck }	14	lbs. 448	
12 Men to each Gun	. .	. .	168
From the 18-pounders on the Upper- deck }	14	252	
10 Men to each Gun	. .	. .	140
From the 9-pounders on the Quarter- deck and Forecastle }	9	81	
8 Men to each Gun	. .	. .	72
From the 24-pounder Carronades on the Round-house }	2	48	
6 Men to each Carronade	. .	. .	12
Total amount of a Broadside . .	39	829	
Total of the Men required . .	. .	. .	392

On board a 74-gun Ship, armed as proposed,
there would be fired in the same time in
which a Broadside is now fired from a
Ship armed as at present:

	Number of Shot.	Weight of Shot.	Number of Men.
From the 32-pounders on the Lower- deck, as before }	14	lbs. 448	168
12 Men to each Gun }	. .	. .	
From the Carronades on the Upper- deck mounted in the usual manner }	14	448	112
8 Men to each Carronade }	. .	. .	
Add for the increased quickness of firing Carronades, compared to Long Guns, one fourth }	$3\frac{1}{2}$	112	36
From the Carronades on the Quarter- deck and Forecastle, mounted on the Non-recoil principle . . . }	9	288	
4 Men to each Carronade }	. .	. .	8
From the Carronades on the Round- house, mounted on the Non-recoil principle }	2	64	
4 Men to each Carronade }	. .	. .	24
From the Carronades on the Gang- ways, mounted on the Non-recoil principle }	6	192	
4 Men to each Carronade }	. .	. .	44
Add for the increased quickness of firing 17 Carronades, mounted on the Non-recoil principle; and which cannot be set down at a less proportion than as three to two }	$8\frac{1}{2}$	272	
Total	57	1824	348
Number of Men	. .	. .	
Difference in favour of the new mode Lesser number of Men required in the new mode }	18	995	44
	. .	. .	

According to this statement, it appears, that the Force of a 74-gun ship, would be more than doubled by this alteration, although to the amount of forty-four men might be taken to be employed on board other Ships, from that part of the Complement, which has been hitherto necessary for working the Guns.

In blowing weather, when the Lower Guns cannot be used, the difference in favor of the new mode, would be as 1376 to 381; that is, more than three and a half to one.

In tempestuous weather, when it would be imprudent to cast loose any one of the Guns, mounted as they are at present, even then on board a Ship armed in the new mode, there would remain the fifteen Carronades (32-pounders) on the Quarter Deck, Forecastle, and Gangways, which no weather could prevent the use of.

In this new mode of Arming, the inconvenience and mistakes which arise in time of action from having shot of different sizes, to serve to the different Guns, would be obviated.

SAM^L. BENTHAM.

Feb. 20th. 1801.

APPENDIX.

Second Supplement to the London Gazette of
Tuesday, the 8th of February, 1814.

*His Majesty's late Ship, Detroit, Put-in-
Bay, Lake Erie, Sept. 12th, 1813.*

SIR,

THE last letter I had the honour of writing to you, dated the 6th instant, I informed you, that unless certain intimation was received of more seamen being on their way to Amherstburg, I should be obliged to sail with the squadron, deplorably manned as it was, to fight the enemy (who blockaded the port) to enable us to get supplies of provisions and stores of every description; so perfectly destitute of provisions was the post, that there was not a day's flour in store, and the crews of the squadron under my command were on half allowance of many things, and when that was done, there was no more. Such were the motives which induced Major-General Proctor (whom by your instructions I was directed to consult, and whose wishes I was enjoined to execute, as far as related to the good of the country), to concur in the necessity of a battle being risked, under the many disadvantages which I laboured; and it now remains for me, the most melancholy task, to relate to you the unfortunate issue of that battle, as well as the many untoward circumstances that led to that event.

No intelligence of seamen having arrived, I sailed, on the 9th instant, fully expecting to meet the enemy next morning, as they had been seen among the islands; nor was I mistaken: soon after daylight they were seen in motion in Put-in-Bay, the wind then at south west, and light, giving us the weather-gage. I bore up for them, in hopes of bringing them to action among the islands, but that intention was soon frustrated, by the wind suddenly shifting to the south east, which brought the enemy directly to the windward.

The line was formed according to a given plan, so that each ship might be supported against the superior force of the two brigs opposed to them. About ten, the enemy had cleared the islands, and immediately bore up, under easy sail, in a line abreast, each brig being also supported by the small vessels. At a quarter before twelve, I commenced the action, by firing a few long guns; about a quarter past, the American Commodore, also supported by two schooners, one carrying four long twelve-pounders, the other a long thirty-two and twenty-four pounder, came to close action with the *Detroit*; the other brig of the enemy, apparently destined to engage the *Queen Charlotte*, supported in like manner by two schooners, kept so far to windward as to render the *Queen Charlotte's* twenty-pounder carronades useless, while she was, with the *Lady Prevost*, exposed to the heavy and destructive fire of the *Caledonian*, and four other schooners, armed with long and heavy guns, like those I have already described.

Too soon, alas! was I deprived of the services of the noble and intrepid Capt. Finnis, who, soon after the commencement of the action, fell, and with him fell my greatest support; soon after, Lieutenant Stokes, of the *Queen Charlotte*, was struck senseless by a splinter, which deprived the country of his services at this very critical period.

As I perceived the *Detroit* had enough to contend with, without the prospect of a fresh brig, Provincial Lieutenant Irvine, who then had charge of the *Queen Charlotte*, behaved with great courage, but his experience was much too limited to supply the place of such an officer as Captain Finnis, hence she proved of far less assistance than I expected.

The action continued with great fury until half past two, when I perceived my opponent drop astern, and a boat passing from him to the *Niagara*, (which vessel was at this time perfectly fresh) the American Commodore seeing that as yet the day was against him, (his vessel having struck soon after he left her,) and also the very defenceless state of the *Detroit*, which ship was now a perfect wreck, principally from the raking fire of the gun-boats, and also that the *Queen Charlotte* was in such a situation, that I could receive very little assistance from her, and the *Lady Prevost*

being at this time too far to leeward, from her rudder being injured, made a noble, and, alas! too successful an effort to regain it, for he bore up, and, supported by his small vessels, passed within pistol-shot, and took a raking position on our bow; nor could I prevent it, as the unfortunate situation of the *Queen Charlotte* prevented us from wearing; in attempting it, we fell on board her; my gallant First Lieutenant, Garland, was now mortally wounded, and myself so severely, that I was obliged to quit the deck. Manœuvred as the squadron was, with not more than fifty British seamen, the rest a mixed crew of Canadians and soldiers, and who were totally unacquainted with such service, rendered the loss of officers more sensibly felt, and never in any action was the loss more severe; every officer commanding vessels, and their seconds, was either killed, or wounded so severely, as to be unable to keep the deck.

Lieutenant Buchan, in the *Lady Prevost*, behaved most nobly, and did every thing that a brave and experienced officer could do, in a vessel armed with twelve-pound carronades, against vessels carrying long guns. I regret to state, that he was severely wounded. Lieutenant Signal, of the *Dover*, commanding the *Hunter*, displayed the greatest intrepidity; but his guns being small (two, four, and six-pounders), he could be of much less service than he wished.

Every officer in the *Detroit* behaved in the most exemplary manner. Lieutenant Inglis shewed such calm intrepidity, that I was fully convinced that, on leaving the deck, I left the ship in excellent hands; and for an account of the battle after that, I refer you to his letter which he wrote me, for your information.

Mr. Hoffmeister, purser of the *Detroit*, nobly volunteered his services on deck, and behaved in a manner that reflects the highest honour on him. I regret to add, that he is very severely wounded in the knee.

Provincial Lieutenant Purvis, and the military officers, Lieutenants Garden, of the *Royal Newfoundland Rangers*, and O'Keefe, of the 41st regiment, behaved in a manner which excited my warmest admiration; the few British seamen I had, behaved with their usual intrepidity, and as long as I was on deck, the troops behaved with a calmness and courage worthy of a more fortunate issue to their exertions.

The weather-gage gave the enemy a prodigious advantage, as it enabled them not only to choose their position, but their distance also, which they did in such a manner as to prevent the carronades of the *Queen Charlotte* and *Lady Prevost* from having much effect; while their long guns did great execution, particularly against the *Queen Charlotte*.

Captain Perry has behaved in a most humane and attentive manner, not only to myself and officers, but to all the wounded.

I trust that, although unsuccessful, you will approve of the motives that induced me to sail under so many disadvantages, and that it may be hereafter proved that, under such circumstances, the honour of His Majesty's flag has not been tarnished.

I inclose the list of killed and wounded.

I have the honour to be, &c.

(Signed) R. H. BARCLAY, Commander,
and late Senior Officer.

*A Statement of the Force of His Majesty's Squadron on
Lake Erie, and that of the United States.*

BRITISH SQUADRON.

Detroit—2 long 24-pounders, 1 long 18-pounder, 6 long 12-pounders, 8 long 9-pounders, 1 24-pounder carronade, 1 18-pounder carronade.

Queen Charlotte—3 long 12-pounders, 14 24-pounder carronades.

Lady Prevost—3 long 9-pounders, 10 12-pounder carronades.

Hunter—2 long 6-pounders, 4 long 4-pounders, 2 long 2 pounds, 2 12-pounder carronades.

Little Belt—1 long 9-pounder, 2 long 6-pounders.

Chippeway—1 long 9-pounder.

UNITED STATES' SQUADRON.

Lawrence—2 long 12-pounders, 18 32-pounder carronades.

Niagara—2 long 12-pounders, 18 32-pounder carronades.

Caledonia—2 long 24-pounders, 1 32-pounder carronade: *all on pivots.*

Ariel—4 long 12-pounders: *all on pivots.*

Summers—1 long 24-pounder, 1 30-pounder carronade: *all on pivots.*

Porcupine—1 long 32-pounder, *on a pivot.*

Tigress—1 long 32-pounder, *on a pivot.*

Scorpion—1 long 32-pounder, 1 24-pounder: *all on pivots.*

Trip—1 long 24-pounder, 1 24-pounder: *all on pivots.*

(Signed) R. H. BARCLAY, Commander.

Quebec, Tuesday, June 14.

A Deputation of Gentlemen waited on Capt. Robert H. Barclay, this day, at two o'clock, and presented him with the following Address:—

To Captain Robert H. Barclay, late Commodore of his Majesty's Flotilla on Lake Erie.

SIR,—We, inhabitants of the City of Quebec, impressed with the highest sentiments of admiration of the heroic courage, skill, and bravery, evinced in so distinguished a manner by yourself, and by the officers, seamen, soldiers, and marines of the Flotilla under your command, in a most gallant, although unfortunate, engagement with a greatly superior fleet of the enemy on Lake Erie, on the 10th day of September last (an engagement which, we believe, was rendered unavoidable on your part, from circumstances of imperious necessity) do earnestly intreat that you will be pleased to accept, as a token of our gratitude, a Piece of Plate, with an inscription commemorative of that act of

heroism and self-devotedness, which, if attended with the success it so eminently merited, would have preserved to his Majesty the entire domination of that important water, and of the Michigan territory.

We participate in the exalted gratifications you will not fail to receive from the approbation of his Royal Highness the Prince Regent, and of his Majesty's Government, and from the consequent remuneration of an ever-liberal and grateful country.

Assuring you of our high consideration and regard, we subscribe ourselves your most faithful and most obedient servants.

(Signed by the Gentlemen, Merchants, and principal Inhabitants.)

To which Address, Captain Barclay was pleased to make the following Reply :—

To the Inhabitants of the City of Quebec.

GENTLEMEN,—I receive with the greatest pleasure the gratifying tribute of the applause of so respectable a body as the inhabitants of the City of Quebec, for the gallant and heroic conduct of the Officers and men serving under my command on Lake Erie. Where, although ultimately overpowered by the superior force of the enemy, they shewed themselves so worthy of a better fate.

And I beg you will do me the justice to think how happy I feel, in finding that an Officer having done his duty faithfully to his King, his Country, and his own honour, does not require victory to insure him the esteem and gratitude of the liberal and generous spirit of the British character.

I have the honour to be,

Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

R. H. BARCLAY, Comr. R. Navy.

