

REPORT

OF

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

NAVY DEPARTMENT, *November 30, 1850.*

SIR: In anticipation of the session of Congress, I respectfully submit the annual report of this department of the public service.

The vessels in commission during the past year, exclusive of the steamer Michigan, under the command of Commander Bullus, which has been cruising on the lakes above Niagara, giving protection to our commerce, and rendering assistance to our distressed merchantmen on those inland seas, have been employed in six different squadrons.

The home squadron, Commodore Parker commanding, whose field of operations extends from the banks of Newfoundland to the mouth of the Amazon river, has comprised the frigate Raritan, Captain Page; the sloop-of-war Albany, Commander Randolph; the sloop-of-war Germantown, Commander Lowndes; the steamer Vixen, Lieutenant Commanding Smith; the steamer Water Witch, Lieutenant Commanding Totten; and the schooner Flirt, Lieutenant Commanding Turner; and has been chiefly occupied in the West Indies and the Gulf of Mexico. The valuable services of the vessels of this squadron, together with the frigate Congress and the steamer Saranac, in preventing a violation of our national obligations in an attempted invasion of the island of Cuba from the United States, and the mission of Commodore Morris to intercede with the Spanish authorities of that island for the lives and liberation of our misguided fellow-citizens who had joined in that expedition and had been captured, were made known to Congress, in a communication from the late President, in the month of June last. The frigate Raritan, being required for more distant service, was withdrawn from this squadron in the month of May, and, after being refitted, was despatched, under the command of Captain Gauntt, to the South Pacific ocean. The steamers Water Witch and Vixen, standing in need of repairs, were brought for that purpose to the navy-yard at Washington, and are expected soon to be again ready for sea. The sloop Germantown, having been infected with yellow fever during her cruise in the West Indies, was taken early in the present autumn to the port of New York, and, being now thoroughly cleansed and refitted, is preparing to join the squadron on the coast of Africa. The steamer Saranac, Capt. Tatnall, has been lately added to this squadron, and bears the broad pendant of Commodore Parker.

The Pacific squadron continued under the command of Commodore T. Ap C. Jones until the month of June last, when he was relieved and succeeded by Commodore McCauley. It consists of the frigate Savannah, Captain Page, bearing the broad pendant of the commander of the squadron; the frigate Raritan, Captain Gauntt; the sloops Vandalia, Com-

mander Gardner, Vincennes, Commander Hudson, Falmouth, Commander Pearson, St. Mary's, Commander Magruder, Warren, (unseaworthy and used as a store-ship,) Lieut. Pickering; the steamer Massachusetts, Lieut. Knox; and the store-ship Supply, Lieut. Kennedy. The sloop Preble, Commander Glynn, and the store-ship Fredonia, Lieut. Neville, are now on their homeward voyage from this station; and the ship-of-the-line Ohio, Commander Stribling, returned therefrom in April, and was placed in ordinary at the navy-yard in Charlestown. It is intended that the frigate Raritan and sloop St. Mary's, which have been recently despatched to this squadron, together with a third vessel, to be designated by the commodore, shall cruise between Cape Horn and Panama, and westward to the 180th degree of longitude, visiting the Marquesas and Friendly Islands, and making their depot of supplies at Valparaiso, while the residue of the squadron will be generally employed in that ocean north of the equator. The advantage, indeed the necessity, of an efficient fleet in the Pacific, for the protection of our extended territory and sudden and wonderful commerce in that hitherto unoccupied region of the world, cannot be too highly estimated, and will be again adverted to in the sequel of this communication.

The squadron on the coast of Brazil, Commodore McKeever commanding, is composed of the frigate Congress, Captain McIntosh, bearing the broad pendant of the commodore; the sloop St. Louis, Commander Cocke; the brig Bainbridge, Lieut. Manning; and the store-ship Relief, Lieut. Totten. The frigate Brandywine, Captain Boorman, the flag-ship of Commodore Storer, who was recently relieved from the command of this station, is expected soon to arrive at the port of New York. The cruise of this squadron extending from the mouth of the river Amazon to Cape Horn, and occasionally eastward to the coast of Africa, its attention has been specially directed to the suppression, by legitimate interposition, of the African slave trade, still carried on to a considerable extent between Brazil and the coast of Africa; to the protection of our neutral rights in the state of hostility lately existing between the Argentine Republic and the Banda Oriental of Uruguay, and the cultivation of relations of commerce and amity with the governments and people of the several nations along the coast of its cruising ground.

The Mediterranean squadron, under the command of Commodore Morgan, consists of his flag-ship, the razee Independence, Captain Jamesson; the frigate Cumberland, Captain Latimer; the steamer Mississippi, Captain Long; and the store-ship Lexington, Lieutenant Mitchell. The course of political events in Europe not appearing to require the continuance of the large force which had been assembled in that sea in consequence of the unsettled aspect of affairs at the date of the last annual report from this department, the frigate St. Lawrence, Captain Paulding, attached to this squadron, was ordered to proceed to the Baltic, on a short cruise, and thence to return to the United States. She arrived at New York in the present month. The frigate Constitution, Captain Conover, also of this squadron, has been ordered home, and may be expected daily. Under orders from the department, Commodore Morgan, with his flag-ship Independence and the steamer Mississippi, visited Lisbon in the month of June, and received on board our chargé d' affaires, on the occasion of his retirement from that court, and conveyed him to Naples. This squadron has been actively engaged in visiting the various ports of the Mediterranean,

the Adriatic, and the Archipelago, and has maintained a discipline and efficiency highly commendable.

The squadron on the coast of Africa, under the command of Commodore Gregory, embraces his flag ship, the sloop-of-war Portsmouth, Commander Peck; the sloop-of-war John Adams, Commander Powell; the sloop-of-war Dale, Commander Pearson; the brig Porpoise, Lieutenant Lardner; and the brig Perry, Lieutenant Foote. Orders were issued for the return of the sloop-of-war Yorktown, Commander Marston, lately attached to this squadron, but before their receipt she was wrecked on a coral reef at the northern extremity of the island of Mayo, one of the Cape de Verdes. All the officers and crew were saved, and have been sent home in the sloop John Adams; they arrived at Norfolk on the 27th instant; the vessel is a total loss. Under the vigilance and energy of the officers of this force, the slave traffic has been broken upon the west coast of Africa, but it still prevails on the south coast, in vessels bearing the flag of the United States, in spite of the efforts of our cruisers, which have been from time to time despatched from the squadron to suppress it. Within the present month, a brig called the Chatsworth, captured as a prize on the latter coast by Lieutenant Foote, in the brig Perry, for being concerned in the slave trade, has arrived in the port of Baltimore for trial.

Occasional instances have occurred of the interference of British cruisers with vessels bearing our flag on that coast, upon suspicion of their being slavers; but in each case the offence has been atoned for by explanations and apologies to our officers on that station, and the reports thereof have been transmitted from this department to the Department of State.

The squadron in the East India and China seas, lately under the command of Commodore Geisinger, who returned home in the sloop St. Mary's in June last, was transferred to the command of Commodore Voorhees, and consists of the sloop of-war Saratoga, Commander Walker, and the sloop-of-war Marion, Commander Glendy. The sloop-of-war Plymouth, Commander Gedney, and the brig, Dolphin, Lieutenant Commanding Page, having been recently detached from this service on the expiration of their cruise, are now on their passage to the United States. In the month of February last, the commander of this squadron took on board of his flag-ship, the sloop of-war Plymouth, at Macao, Mr. Ballestier, who had been appointed a commercial agent of the United States, and carried him to Cochin China and other parts of Eastern Asia, with a view to the extension of our commercial relations among those distant and peculiar nations.

It is a source of high gratification that, wherever our flag has been displayed by a national vessel, it has received the respect due to the national character, and that our interests and commerce in every sea have been secure and prosperous under its protection.

Under the joint resolution of Congress approved May 2, 1850, "authorizing the President to accept and attach to the navy two vessels offered by Henry Grinnell, esq., of New York, to be sent to the Arctic seas in search of the British commander, Sir John Franklin, and his companions," whose uncertain and melancholy situation has enlisted the sympathies of the friends of science and nautical adventure throughout the world, two brigantines were received, and by order of my predecessor were placed under the command of Lieutenant J. De Haven, who, with a sufficient crew of officers and men, nobly volunteered for that service. The com-

mand of one of these vessels was assigned to Passed Midshipman S. P. Griffin, Lieutenant De Haven commanding the other in person, and having the direction of the expedition. They sailed from New York in the month of May, and, at the date of their last report to the department, had advanced to the 75th degree of north latitude, and about the 60th degree of west longitude, gallantly contending with the icebergs of that region, and as yet not without hope of success in their humane but perilous enterprise.

In the active service, afloat, of the officers of the navy, it is proper to enumerate their labors on the coast survey—a work which, although committed to the direction of the Treasury Department, is, in the most important part of its field operations, essentially performed by them. During the last year, nine parties—eight in the Atlantic and one in the Pacific—each in charge of a lieutenant in the navy, accompanied by a competent force of midshipmen as assistants, have been actively engaged in this survey. Whether in consideration of the main objects expected to be realized in the completion of the work, and the large agency in its execution devolved on the navy, it would not be more appropriate and just, as well as economical, to assign it wholly to this branch of the service, is worthy of the attentive consideration of the legislature.

Having presented a hasty review of the service of our various squadrons during the past year, and designing to suggest some general considerations upon the naval policy required by the present interests of the country, I deem it needful to a full comprehension of the subject very briefly to review our present naval establishment.

The vessels of the navy of the United States consist of—

7 ships of the line,
 1 razee,
 12 frigates,
 21 sloops of war,
 4 brigs,
 2 schooners,
 5 steam frigates,
 3 steamers of the 1st class,
 6 steamers less than 1st class,
 5 storeships.

Of these there are in commission—

1 razee,
 6 frigates,
 15 sloops of war,
 4 brigs,
 2 schooners, (coast survey,)
 2 steam frigates,
 1 steamer of 1st class,
 3 steamers less than 1st class,
 3 ships of the line as receiving-ships,
 1 steamer, do do do.
 1 sloop, do do do.

There are also on the stocks and in progress of construction, but the work thereon now suspended—

4 ships of the line,
 2 frigates.

To the foregoing may be added a contingent naval force of vessels owned by individuals, but built by contract with the government, and employed in the transportation of the mail, and liable in any emergency to be taken at valuation and converted into vessels of war, namely :

4 steamers of the 1st class, employed on the line between New York and Liverpool. A fifth is contracted for, but not yet constructed.

1 steamer of the 1st class between New York and Chagres. A second steamer on this line has been brought into use, but has not been finished so as to undergo inspection and be received. The contract on this line, as on that to Liverpool, provides for five steam ships.

To supply the demands of the service in the construction, equipment, and repair of vessels of all descriptions, navy-yards are established at—

1. Portsmouth, New Hampshire;
2. Charlestown, Massachusetts;
3. Brooklyn, New York;
4. Philadelphia;
5. Washington;
6. Norfolk;
7. Pensacola;
8. Memphis.

Permanent stone docks have been many years since erected at the yards in Charlestown and Norfolk, and a third is nearly completed in that at Brooklyn. Floating balance-docks, with stone basins and railways, are expected to be completed for use at Portsmouth and Pensacola in the course of the ensuing year; and a floating sectional-dock, also with a stone basin and railway, at Philadelphia, within the same period. If these three docks shall realize the expectations of the government, they, with the dry-dock at New York, will have augmented our naval facilities in this respect threefold within the next twelve months, and will have provided all the accommodation of that kind which may be required on the waters of the Atlantic and, the Gulf of Mexico for many years to come. The navy-yard at Washington carries on a highly important manufactory of ordnance and ordnance stores, of anchors, chain cables, steam-engines, and other fabrics of iron, and preparations are in progress to erect there machinery for rolling copper—an establishment long wanted, as well on the score of economy as to furnish a better quality of rolled copper for sheathing vessels than can be obtained in market. The yard at Memphis is being immediately prepared for the manufacture of cordage and other supplies of hempen materials for naval uses, and its operations may be enlarged with the necessities of the service. I have regretted to learn that there has been some loss in the expenditure there, in consequence of the difficulty of obtaining a firm foundation for the buildings; and it is in contemplation to have a survey of the yard by a board of engineers constituted for that purpose, in accordance with the recommendation of the chief of the Bureau of Yards and Docks, to provide against like casualties for the future.

In conformity with the act of the last session, authorizing the construction of a sectional or floating dry-dock, basin, and railway on the coast of the Pacific, I have invited proposals for the construction of such a work, and the officers of the proper bureau are now engaged in calcula-

tions intended to test the reasonableness of those offered. So soon as satisfactory terms shall be agreed upon, it is the intention of the department to expedite the work with all practicable despatch.

It is estimated that, independently of the public works, fixtures, machinery, &c., at the existing navy-yards, the stores on hand for the construction, equipment, and repair of vessels are equal in value, in round numbers, to \$6,500,000. The resources of the country in timber, iron, copper, hemp, and every species of naval supplies, will enable these to be increased according to our necessities. Many intelligent persons incline to the opinion that, in the present state of mechanical science and enterprise, and with the abundance of capital in our country, it would be wiser to rely upon contracts with private citizens for the building and repairs of our public vessels, than to carry on the work under the supervision of public officers; and it may well be doubted whether, if a system were now to be projected, without reference to what has been heretofore done, the number of our navy-yards might not be considerably abridged. With these establishments, however, now capable of use, and with the inconsiderable amounts necessary to preserve them, I cannot recommend that any of them be abandoned. The system of dependence on private contracts, moreover, would deprive the government of any convenience of location for repairing and building vessels, and concentrate all such operations in the commercial cities, where private as well as public patronage might be expected. It is, moreover, so indispensable that ships of war shall be constructed on the most improved plans, to be devised only by a practical knowledge of naval warfare as well as of naval architecture, and shall be thoroughly built, of the best materials, that it would be hazardous to resort to a new method of supplying them, where the chief security for their effectiveness would be the profit to be realized by the contractor. In a time of war, when every expedient might be necessary to add to the navy, our private ship-yards would doubtless be found most important auxiliaries for the supply of vessels; but it would be most injudicious to depend on them as our only resource in preparation for war.

Such being the condition of the vessels of the navy, and our facilities and preparations for augmenting their number, the question naturally presents itself, What naval force do we require? The answer to this question must, of course, vary with the varying circumstances of the country. Having been organized on its present basis by the act of Congress of 1798, and considerably enlarged, in consequence of the state of hostilities with France, for the two or three years succeeding, the naval force was reduced in 1801, and the number of vessels and officers limited by law, the supernumerary officers being discharged and the vessels sold. The Tripolitan war, which soon succeeded, required speedy additions to the force thus reserved; and, with our extended and increasing commerce, with the obvious necessity for its protection, and the protracted dispute with Great Britain as to the rights of our flag on the ocean, and the brilliant achievements by which those rights were vindicated by the navy in the war which ended this dispute, it so gained in the public estimation, that, at the close of the war, instead of a reduction of this arm of the national defence, as was the case with the army, the annual sum of \$1,000,000 for eight years was appropriated for the gradual increase of the navy. Although this appropriation was reduced to \$500,000 per year in 1820,

the policy of gradual increase still continued to be a favorite object with Congress and the country. In 1825, 1826, and 1827, the question of a proper naval peace establishment was much discussed and considered, but was left undecided by the legislature; and appropriations for increase, as well as maintenance and repair, have continued to be made, with some irregularity as to intervals and amounts, until the present time, but without any definition by Congress of the number and description of vessels deemed necessary for the national marine.

The numbers in the various grades of the *personnel* of the navy has, until within a recent period, been left still more undefined than the number of ships. Since the reduction of the number of vessels and men, after the re-establishment of friendly relations with France by treaty in 1801, no statute for more than forty years ever limited the sum total of persons to be employed in the navy or in its several ranks and offices. The number of commissioned officers in any grade up to and including a captaincy depended on the President and Senate, and the number of warrant officers on the President or head of the department alone. By a provisional clause in the annual appropriation bill approved August 4, 1842, the number of officers in the respective grades of the navy was directed not to be increased beyond the number in service on the 1st of January, 1842, and any further appointment of midshipmen was forbidden until they should be reduced to the number in service on the 1st of January, 1841. In this retrospective proviso of an appropriation bill, the number of officers was fixed by a standard not then before the eye of the legislature, but to be searched for in the register of the service for the two preceding years; and by this, after being thus ascertained, it continues to be regulated.

The *personnel* of the navy thus established comprises—

- 68 captains;
- 97 commanders;
- 327 lieutenants;
- 68 surgeons;
- 37 passed assistant surgeons;
- 43 assistant surgeons;
- 64 pursers;
- 24 chaplains;
- 12 professors of mathematics;
- 11 masters in the line of promotion; and
- 464 passed and other midshipmen.

To which are to be added, besides other warrant officers, according to the annual appropriation for pay and subsistence, 7,500 petty officers, seamen, ordinary seamen, landsmen, and boys. The capacity of the country to enlarge this force, whenever desirable, may be readily perceived by stating that we have now in the mercantile marine 3,000,000 of tons of shipping—an amount greater than that of any other nation of the world; and, according to the ordinary estimate of six men to every one hundred tons, there are in our merchant service 180,000 seamen. In this array of hardy mariners to recruit from, and in our vast resources for building, equipping, and arming ships of war, we possess the elements of a naval power unsurpassed in the history of nations. The problem to be solved by the statesman is, how far these elements are to be brought into use—whether the present establishment, with its accustomed regulation and

direction, is adapted to our present necessities, or whether it may be reformed, regulated, and improved, so as better to answer the great objects of its institution: and, in considering these questions, we must bear constantly in mind that we have arrived at a new era in our history, arising from our occupation and vast extension of our territories on the coast of the Pacific.

It is not a matter of surprise that a system which has grown to its present dimensions without any law of increase should be found unshapely and disproportioned. An obvious fault of the present organization of the *personnel* of the navy, as above set forth, is the disparity between the head and the subordinate parts. The natural desire for promotion has brought into the higher grades a greater number of officers than is required by the present force of ships and men, or than will be required in any state of things likely soon to occur.

The shore stations, comprehending navy-yards, receiving ships, and naval asylum, and including one of each for the Pacific coast, will require—

18 captains;
21 commanders;
56 lieutenants;
27 surgeons;
10 passed and assistant surgeons;
14 pursers;
12 chaplains;
60 passed and other midshipmen.

Leaving for sea service—

50 captains;
76 commanders;
271 lieutenants;
41 surgeons;
70 passed and assistant surgeons;
50 pursers;
10 chaplains;
404 passed and other midshipmen.

Assuming the present number of 7,500 petty officers, seamen, ordinary seamen, landsmen, and boys, as the force to be commanded, and dividing it into six squadrons, each to consist of—

1 ship of the line;
1 frigate;
1 steamer of the first class;
1 do second class;
3 sloops of war:

It will give employment at one time to—

24 captains;
30 commanders;
156 lieutenants;
36 surgeons;
60 passed and assistant surgeons;
42 pursers;
6 chaplains;
396 passed and other midshipmen.

Leaving unemployed, either on land or sea—

- 26 captains;
- 46 commanders;
- 115 lieutenants;
- 5 surgeons;
- 10 passed and assistant surgeons;
- 8 pursers;
- 4 chaplains;
- 8 passed and other midshipmen.

In a service subjected to hardship, danger, and deprivation of the comforts of domestic life, there should be, at all times, such a number of officers as to allow a reasonable respite between active cruises at sea, and to provide against losses from sudden casualty. But, as duty on shore is itself a relief from duty at sea, it is believed that the above list of supernumerary officers, at least in the three highest grades, is greater than is demanded for an effective naval establishment; and I therefore recommend that the numbers be reduced to—

- 60 captains;
- 80 commanders;
- 300 lieutenants;

with corresponding modifications in the inferior grades. Such a reduction would adapt the supply of officers to the state of the service, and, by affording employment to all, with occasional intervals of relaxation, would tend to advance the standard of professional skill and acquirement. It would still leave in the grades of and below a lieutenancy a sufficient number for the duties of ordnance, hydrography, scientific observation, the coast survey, and all special service, besides active duty at sea, and at the navy-yards and other shore stations.

While the propriety of this curtailment would appear to be manifest, to give symmetry to the naval corps, and to infuse life and animation into all its parts, by more active employment, and therefore to be demanded by the public interests, justice to those who have devoted themselves to the service of their country, and have given to it the prime of their manhood, requires that it shall be effected in the most delicate manner to the feelings of those discharged, and that suitable remuneration shall be made to them for the disappointment and change in their means of livelihood. We are not, however, without precedents for such a proceeding, in the reduction of the navy by the act of March 3, 1801, and the large reduction of the army to a peace establishment by the act of March 2, 1821. Whether the designation of the persons to be discharged shall be devolved on the President, as in the instances just recited, or on a board of officers convened for that purpose, is respectfully referred to the wisdom of Congress.

Having, by this process, determined on the size of the navy, it will be necessary, in order to render it effective, to provide that, from time to time, as officers may decline in capacity for useful public service, either from superannuation or other cause, they may be retired from the active list on terms both just and liberal.

The duty of the government to take care, in old age or in unavoidable decrepitude or disease, of its gallant and faithful servants, should be in no respect pretermitted; but nothing should be allowed to interfere with the efficiency of the navy for the purposes of its institution. Incompetency from vice and dissipation should be viewed with displeasure: incom-

petency from unavoidable and honorable causes, with commiseration and kindness. But in neither case should command or promotion be denied to those who must really and effectually stand between the country and its enemies in the hour of danger. Even in judicial offices, held during good behaviour, in all well-regulated states, provision has been made for removal from office for mental or physical incompetency, as well as for criminality. In this connexion, it is worthy of serious consideration whether mere seniority of commission should not be disregarded in promotions to grades above that of commander. Although the power of the President in nominating to all offices is unlimited by the constitution and dependent on no qualifications in the candidate, and although, in a few instances, there have been departures from the rule in question, yet general usage has made lineal promotion to all grades in the navy almost a matter of right. It is certainly convenient, inasmuch as it prevents favoritism, and advances discipline and subordination, by suppressing hostile rivalry, to adhere to this usage to a certain point of elevation; but it is inconsistent with the spirit of the age, as well as with all our ideas of propriety, that the highest rank in a profession whose active members are habitually exposed, if not to the dangers of battle, to those of the ocean, the tempest, and of pestilential climates, and in which there is so wide a field for competition in acquirement, skill, and conduct, should be made to depend on longevity or survivorship—the mere conditions and accidents of entailed estates in family settlements. It is therefore proposed that, in all future promotions to a captaincy, or to a higher rank, if such shall be established, seniority shall not be regarded, and merit shall be esteemed the only criterion of selection. This will appear to be the more eminently just and proper, since, under the present system, no brevet rank or other advancement in the naval service is allowed to reward the most heroic exploit or acknowledged professional superiority—promotion coming none the sooner to the best, none the later to the worst, provided they can escape being cut off from the service by the sentence of a court-martial.

Another defect in the present establishment, too manifest to be overlooked by the most casual observer, is the disparity between the ages of subaltern officers and their grades, proceeding from the fixed numbers in each rank, and the failure to provide for any promotion except in cases of vacancy. The senior passed midshipmen now in the service are older than were Perry, Decatur, and Macdonough when they achieved their victories, with so much renown to the country; the senior lieutenants, past the age when military duty is required of the citizen in the militia; and the commanders and captains, proportionally older. The aspiring youth now entering the navy may not hope to reach the rank of a commander in the period which is ascertained to be the average duration of human life. This long apprenticeship, which is not required for learning his duties, but is occasioned by keeping him in waiting for promotion until the exit of some one above him, not only depresses his ambition by deferring his hopes, but denies him opportunity for the culture of his self-reliance, confidence in his own skill and judgment, and the hundred nameless attributes of a thorough officer which are only to be acquired by being thrown upon his own resources and responsibility.

To remedy this defect, which has become the more grievous and striking since the limitation imposed on the number of officers and pro-

motions by the law of 1842, already referred to, two methods have been severally suggested by officers of great merit and intelligence:

1st. To reduce the number of midshipmen so as to furnish only so many as may be required to supply the higher grades as vacancies may occur;

2d. To educate a number equally as great as that now established, and to fix an age in every grade upon the attainment of which, if no vacancy exists for promotion, they may be retired from the navy, to find employment in the merchant service, and supply a reserved corps, in case of war, of the most efficient character.

Whether either of these is worthy of adoption, or some preferable cure may be devised for this imperfection, is submitted for the deliberation of Congress.

I also most earnestly recommend that the service itself be elevated by recognising by law the office of commodore, and by the creation of at least two officers of the rank of rear admiral. This increase of rank in the navy, often proposed in the earlier history of the country, seems now to be demanded by the highest considerations of policy and duty. Not to speak of its effect in promoting discipline and effectiveness by an increased and concentrated responsibility in the highest grades of the service, it would add to the dignity of our officers, not unfrequently the representatives of their country in direct intercourse with foreign governments, and to the respect accorded to them by those of other nations, in their intercourse abroad, and furnish a new and powerful incentive to excellence in the minds of the meritorious and aspiring of all the inferior ranks. We have at this time veterans in our navy with the commissions only of captain, and the titles, by courtesy, of commodore, because they have commanded squadrons, who meet on the ocean, as rear admirals and vice admirals, contemporaries in other services with whom, in early life, they associated as co-lieutenants, and who now, with superior rank, have often commands numerically inferior to their own. A nation which must be classed among the great naval powers of the world, and which, in the abundance of its resources and its situation between the two greatest oceans, is capable of occupying the very first place, should no longer delay the establishment of higher naval ranks, and should look to and prepare for the command of fleets as well as squadrons, in any exigency which may call for it.

Our navy, in its aggregate of persons, is about equal to the army. The commanders of some of its squadrons have actually under their command more men than a division—the command of a major general. And yet its highest commissioned officer, a captain, ranks with a colonel. By a resolution of the Continental Congress in 1776, providing a navy for the war of the Revolution, the relative rank of officers in the land and naval services was established as follows, viz:

An admiral, as a general.

Vice admiral, as a lieutenant general.

Rear admiral, as a major general.

Commodore, as a brigadier general.

Captain of a ship of forty guns and upwards, as a colonel, &c., &c.

This scheme of relative rank prevails in the British service at the present day. It is worthy of remark, that, although at no period since has there been less than one major general of the army of the United States, our

naval officers—though, in addition to their proper commands, they are, from the nature of their service, much more frequently than those of the army called to act for their country in diplomatic intercourse with distant nations, whose artificial states of society render rank so important a consideration—have never been advanced beyond a commandant of a regiment. No comparison can possibly be indulged to the disparagement of either of these necessary arms of our defence, which have so harmoniously co-operated against the public enemies, wherever opportunity has permitted; and no good reason can be perceived why the highest officer of the one service should not, as a general rule, now as in 1776, and here as in Great Britain, be equal in rank to the highest officer of the other. If Congress shall think proper to add the rank of lieutenant general to the army as a reward for the long service and brilliant success of a veteran soldier, it may be accompanied or followed by its correlative of vice admiral in the navy, according to the pleasure of the legislature.

Of the two rear admirals proposed, one might be most usefully employed at the department itself, when not on more active duty, in such supervision and direction of the *personnel* of the navy as might be assigned him by the head of the department, in analogy to the connexion of the general-in-chief and the adjutant general with the Department of War. The other, when not in command at sea, should establish his quarters at San Francisco, or other point on the Pacific coast, and should be invested with command over all the naval officers and seamen west of the Rocky mountains, as well as the naval forces in the Pacific, and in the China and East India seas—reporting all his orders, and the operations and proceedings under them, to the department, at stated and early periods. The distance of our Pacific coast from the seat of government, even by the most expeditious route, is too great for an energetic system of naval operations by means of the transmission of orders and despatches to and fro, or even for the enforcement of proper discipline, under the existing law. In the latter particular, our squadron there is in a less eligible situation than it was before the acquisition of California. The commander of a squadron on a foreign station is empowered to order courts martial, and to approve and carry into effect their sentences; but if it be within the United States, a court can only be ordered by the President or the head of the department. Thus military justice, which was formerly of easy enforcement where the squadron was sufficiently numerous to furnish the necessary officers to constitute a court, is dependent now on orders from Washington, and has become too tardy in its administration for the ends of the service. This inconvenience is seriously felt, and demands an early remedy. It is, however, but one of many illustrations of the necessity for stationing on that coast an officer of higher rank and larger authority than any now existing in the navy.

The object in maintaining our naval force in the Pacific, and demanding that it shall be in the highest state of efficiency, is twofold:

1st. To protect a coast more than one thousand miles in length, occupied by a sparse population, probably not exceeding in the whole three hundred thousand souls, two-thirds of whom are dependent on sea-going commerce for the supply of their ordinary food and raiment, and are separated by mountains and deserts of a thousand miles in extent from our other settlements.

2d. To give adequate protection and encouragement to our country-

men engaged in the whale fisheries, in commerce in the South Pacific, and to that expanding commerce with Eastern Asia which our possessions in the Pacific will enable us to command, with a proper improvement of our lawful advantages. A naval policy adequate to these ends seems to be indispensably required. It is a fact perhaps not generally known, that the longest voyage, in the time necessary for its accomplishment, now made by navigators, is that from our Atlantic to our Pacific ports; and hence it will appear manifestly expedient, in cruises on that ocean, to fit out naval expeditions from the Pacific coast, which shall return thither at the end of their tour. A vessel sent there from the Atlantic, according to the present arrangement, to return at the end of three years, loses one year of the three in going and returning; and, from the marked difference in the navigation of the two oceans, if the design be to bring her home to refit, she will need a condition of repair, to enable her to weather Cape Horn and pass up the boisterous coast of the Atlantic, which will qualify her for an extended cruise in the Pacific. The extraordinary state of prices now prevailing forbids the idea of building vessels or recruiting seamen on that coast. Indeed, the flag-ship of the commodore of the Pacific squadron was, at last advices, deficient by more than one-half in her complement of men, without the ability to recruit more, except at wages far above those now allowed. It must, therefore, be greatly to our interest, at least until a change in monetary affairs in California—

1st. To build ships and recruit sailors on the Atlantic coast for the Pacific fleet;

2d. When a sufficient number of vessels shall be placed on that side of the continent, to retain them there for permanent use; and

3d. When crews are wanted to man them, after the expiration of the term of those originally carried out, to enlist them in the Atlantic ports, and send them out in government transports, in the ordinary line of travel, across the Isthmus of Panama, as they are now transported from one Atlantic port to another. With a dock for repairing vessels on the California coast, as contemplated by the act of the last session of Congress, such a course of policy would enable us, at all times, to keep an effective fleet in the Pacific, and operate a vast saving in time and money to the service in that quarter.

By a judicious disposition of our vessels, and the improvement of the organization and discipline of the *personnel* to the highest point of efficiency, it is believed that our naval force need not be immediately augmented in any great degree, notwithstanding the accession to our territories; and that the policy of "gradual increase," so long pursued, while it requires attention to every improvement in naval construction and warfare, need not be materially hastened. How great will be the transition in the art of war on the sea by reason of the introduction of steam as a propelling power to vessels of war, remains yet to be determined. That it has already furnished an arm of great power, which has been well likened to flying artillery on land, is beyond all question. And, though not concurring in the opinion that war steamers will supersede sail vessels as ships of war, I am yet thoroughly persuaded that they will be most valuable auxiliaries; and I respectfully submit for your examination, herewith, a letter from an officer of much intelligence and experience in the command of steam-ships of war, in regard to their efficiency in hostile

operations, simply as striking bodies, in running down the vessels of an enemy, by means of their great weight and the momentum of which they are capable by the power of steam. As connected with this subject, I likewise invite attention to the recommendation of the chief of the Bureau of Construction, that our sail-ships of war hereafter to be constructed shall be furnished with steam-propellers, to be used on occasions where celerity of motion adverse to the prevailing winds may be important. But, with the improvements constantly going on in ocean steamers, I would not recommend a large addition to this species of naval force, except in the event of war, lest the progress of invention shall supplant them by others of superior construction.

Of the four war steamers authorized to be built by the act of Congress of the 3d of March, 1847, the Saranac only has been gotten ready for sea. It is, however, not doubted that the other three will be also ready in the course of a few months. While the Saranac will be retained in the home squadron as an effective cruiser in any emergency which may arise, it is contemplated to attach the Susquehanna to the East India squadron, and to send the two remaining ones to the Pacific and the coast of Brazil. It is in contemplation also to require the commandants of the squadrons in the Pacific and the East Indies, and in like manner of those on the coasts of Brazil and Africa, at certain convenient times and places, to meet with the greater parts of their respective commands for the purpose of exercising in fleets. It has so happened that all our naval battles, in which the skill and prowess of our officers have been so signally maintained, have been (with inconsiderable exceptions on the lakes) fought between single ships. And it remains to be demonstrated whether their proficiency in the signals, combinations, manœuvres, and exercises of fleets is equal to their well-tryed abilities in inferior commands.

The Naval Academy at Annapolis, having been placed under a new and improved system of regulations, to take effect from the first day of July last, and under an enlarged corps of professors, affords facilities and means of professional education not heretofore enjoyed by the young gentlemen entering the service, and, it is to be hoped, is destined to furnish the navy with what has been so long and so beneficially enjoyed by the army in the Military Academy at West Point. The attachment to the Naval Academy of a practice-ship, for the purpose of practical instruction in seamanship and gunnery, in short cruises, under the direction of the superintendent, in analogy to the system of encampment by the cadets, is regarded as an improvement of great value. The academic term, in conformity with the new arrangement, commenced on the 1st of October, under the direction of Commander Stribling as superintendent, and is in successful progress. Plans and estimates for improvements in the buildings and grounds of the academy will be found in the report of the chief of the Bureau of Ordnance and Hydrography, which are approved and recommended by the department. Applications of meritorious persons for the appointment of midshipmen induce me to recommend that a few appointments at large be allowed to the President, as a means of promoting youths of extraordinary promise, and of placing the sons of officers of the navy and army, who have little choice of residence, on a footing of equality with the other young men of the country in eligibleness for the naval service.

The deficiency of the articles of war for the government of the navy

has been so repeatedly brought to the attention of Congress in the reports of my predecessors, that I could content myself on this head by a general reference to them; but for the alteration made in these articles by a clause in the appropriation act of the last session. As the department construes that act, the punishment of whipping for any crime or offence, whether by the judgment of a court-martial or the summary command of the chief officer of a ship, is totally abolished. Deferring entirely to this decision of the legislature, I deem it my duty to remind them that the act in question has imposed on them the duty of revising the whole system of offences and punishments in the navy without delay. Both officers and seamen should be early informed, not only what is the rule of their conduct, but what penalty will be incurred in case of its violation. The punishment by whipping entered so largely into the code heretofore existing since the foundation of the navy, that its abolition has left in the hands of authority but few other sanctions than those of death and imprisonment; and its simple prohibition, without any other change of the system, leaves the offender still exposed to the extreme penalty of human law, to which stripes were in many instances only a milder alternative.

Thus:

Article 14. No officer or private in the navy shall disobey the lawful orders of his superior officer, or strike him, or draw, or offer to draw, or raise, any weapon against him, while in the execution of the duties of his office, on pain of death, or such other punishment as a court-martial shall inflict."

Article 17. If any person in the navy shall desert, or shall entice others to desert, he shall suffer death, or such other punishment as a court-martial shall adjudge, &c."

Article 20. If any person in the navy shall sleep upon his watch, or negligently perform the duty assigned him, or leave his station before regularly relieved, he shall suffer death, or such other punishment as a court-martial shall adjudge; or, if the offender be a private, he may, at the discretion of the captain, be put in irons, or flogged not exceeding twelve lashes."

It is manifest, therefore, that, in all such cases, involving the sentences of courts-martial, the recent legislation has in no degree abated the severity of the naval code. But it was probably the infliction of this punishment in a summary way, by the order of a commander of a ship, in which there have, doubtless, at times, been abuses, which was the principal mischief intended to be remedied. The alternative in that case, and which now exists, is confinement in irons. Aside from any comparison in the degrees of degradation of these two modes of punishment, it cannot fail to be observed that the latter disables and weakens the ships' company by the amount of every man confined, and would have few terrors for hardened offenders on the trying occasions of a battle or a storm. It must also be recollected that, existing at discretion, it is liable to the same abuse with its alternative already mentioned, although not so effectual for the enforcement of discipline. In view of the difficulties which surround the subject, I availed myself of the presence of a board of highly intelligent and experienced officers, assembled at the seat of government for another purpose, to ask their opinion on several questions connected with this change of discipline, and will probably be able to communicate it within a few days. And I respectfully suggest that a

committee of Congress shall take the testimony on oath of respectable and experienced seamen, as well as officers, in reference to a proper code of discipline for the service, and especially in regard to the discretionary punishments to be imposed by officers in command of single ships.

The line of mail steamers between New York and Liverpool owned by Mr. E. K. Collins and his associates commenced the transportation of the mails in April last, in compliance with their contract with this department under the act of Congress of the 3d March, 1847, in two steamships, the Atlantic and Pacific, to which have been recently added two others, the Arctic and Baltic, and has been eminently successful in making the passages across the ocean.

The line from New York to Chagres owned by Mr. George Law, assignee of A. G. Sloo, and authorized by the same act, has had no accession to its number of vessels since the last annual report from this department.

The line from Panama to San Francisco, and thence to Astoria, of which Mr. William H. Aspinwall is proprietor, as assignee of Arnold Harris, has received an addition of two new steamers, the Tennessee and Columbia, within the last few months—making its whole number five. According to the directions contained in the act of the last session, approved 28th of September, 1850, directing payment to be made on these several lines according to the service actually performed, there was paid to George Law, for mail service on his line from 1st December, 1848, to 30th September, 1850, in cash, \$300,278, and by credit on his debt for advances \$50,000.

This payment was made in compliance with what was supposed to be the intention of Congress in the proviso to the appropriation for the mail steam service in that act. That, however, was a temporary provision, and the especial direction of Congress is desired in relation to future payments for service on this line.

And on the 20th and 29th November, 1850, there was paid to E. K. Collins and his associates, for service on their line, \$163,000—leaving the former indebted to the United States in the sum of \$240,000, with interest, and the latter in the sum of \$385,000, for advancements made in aid of their enterprise, which will become due in April next, with interest.

Mr. William H. Aspinwall repaid the whole amount of the advancements received by him in mail service prior to the 18th of February last, according to a settlement then made, and, having executed his contract with great punctuality, has had further settlements with the department to the 30th of September last.

I respectfully recommend that a line for the transportation of the mails from San Francisco to Macao, Shanghai, or other point in Eastern Asia, either by steamers or sail vessels, be also established. Such a line would furnish regular and early means of communication between our squadrons in the Pacific and the China seas, enabling their early co-operation whenever occasion might require, and would contribute much to the facilitation of that commerce with the East to which reference has been already made. In consequence of the adaptation of mail steamers principally for speed and transportation, it has been doubted, by officers of great intelligence, whether they can be converted into war steamers of the first class without much additional expense, since they have neither the strength to bear heavy armaments nor to withstand cannonading. But as long as warfare at sea, unlike that on land, permits the seizure of the

private property of the people of an enemy when found afloat on the ocean, they can always be employed with great advantage under light armaments against the commerce of an adversary. With speed to overtake a merchant vessel, and at the same time elude the pursuit of a cruiser, they must prove a most formidable means of annoyance to merchantmen.

Operations at the National Observatory and hydrographical office continue to be conducted in a manner highly satisfactory, and are adding much to the stores of knowledge and the facilities of ocean navigation. By virtue of the authority contained in the act of Congress approved March 3, 1849, I have recently appointed an agent in the city of London to make sale of copies of the charts prepared at the hydrographical office for the mere cost of printing them, with the charges of transportation and a reasonable commission, so as to diffuse the information afforded by them to nautical persons generally.

The astronomical expedition, under Lieutenant Gilliss, to Santiago de Chile, with a view to a new determination of the distance of the earth from the sun, by observations carried on at the same time there and here, and other scientific objects, has prosecuted its labors successfully, and has been signally favored by the Chilian government and people, as is manifest from the flattering mention of it in the recent message of the President to the Congress of that country, and from his applying and procuring to be attached to it a number of their young men as students of astronomy.

The preparations for the publication of an American Nautical Almanac, by Lieutenant Davis, under the direction of the department, are in an advanced state of progress. It will appear, in a letter appended from him, that he has solicited and engaged the labors of scientific persons in various parts of the United States as assistant computers; and there is every reason to hope that, when this work shall be completed, it will not only be highly valuable to navigators, but will be worthy of the scientific character of the country.

The experiments of Professor Page, in testing the application of electro-magnetism as a motive power in mechanics, have been continued since my report made in compliance with a resolution of the Senate in September last, by virtue of the appropriation of March 3, 1849; and he is now engaged in preparation for a trial trip of a locomotive, on a railroad, propelled by this power.

The meteorological observations of Professor Espy, which are still in progress, under the appropriation made at the last session of Congress, will be detailed in his report to be presented to Congress.

The course of experiments in gunnery, and the preparation of ordnance and ordnance stores of all kinds at the navy-yard in Washington, have been conducted in a manner highly satisfactory to the department; and, in consideration of the great importance of this particular duty to the effectiveness of our naval armament everywhere, and the labor and responsibility of the officer charged with it, I with deference recommend that his compensation be made equal to that of a commander at sea.

A board of naval officers has been convened, agreeably to your instructions, for advice and information on the questions of rank between officers of the military and civil branches of the naval service, and the relative rank of officers of the army and navy when acting together, on which the opinion of the President was requested by a resolution of the House

of Representatives at the last session, and their report will be laid before you as soon as received.

The joint board of officers of the army and navy, who have been engaged in the examination of our Pacific coast, with reference to harbors, fortifications, light houses, navy-yards, and docks, is expected to finish its work in the present month, and return to the seat of government. The selection of a site for a navy-yard and dock on that coast has been deferred until the reception of the report of the board, and a personal conference with the officers composing it.

By virtue of the authority conferred on the head of this department, in the act of Congress approved September 28, 1850, to purchase American water-rotted hemp in open market for the use of the navy, provided the price shall not exceed that of "the foreign article for the last five years," the hemp agents at Louisville and St. Louis have been instructed to make inquiries and receive proposals as to the price of the article; but no sufficient information has yet been received to justify purchases of the quantity required.

I subjoin the reports of the respective heads of bureaux of this department and of the commandant of the marine corps, presenting estimates for the fiscal year ending the 30th of June, 1852; together with an aggregate statement of the appropriations required for all objects under the supervision of this department—the sum total of which is - \$8,111,601

From this should be deducted the estimates for extraordinary objects, as follows, viz: Transportation of the mails, improvements of navy-yards, Nautical Almanac, &c., &c.	2,210,980
To show the amount proposed for the support of the naval service, including the marine corps, for the year -	<u>5,900,621</u>

The above aggregate, it will be perceived, is less by more than one million of dollars than were the estimates for the present year. To it, however, must be added the amount which may be required for the floating dry-dock, basin, and railway on the coast of the Pacific, of which an estimate will be supplied so soon as a contract shall be made and the price of the whole work agreed upon.

I take the liberty to suggest that the appropriations for the annual support of the navy should be separated from those for fixed and permanent objects on shore, and more especially from those for extraordinary objects under the supervision of the department, which, however important as subjects of public interest, are not necessarily connected with it. If, in analogy to the bills for the erection of fortifications and for the support of the Military Academy as related to the army, distinct bills were prepared for navy yards and docks, and the Naval Academy, and for the mail steam service, and other objects of the class above mentioned, it would contribute to a better understanding of the matters involved—perhaps to greater economy under each of these various heads—and would relieve the navy from the charge of extravagant expenditures.

The total amount drawn from the treasury during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1850, as shown by the statement of appropriations for the naval service prepared by the Second Comptroller of the Treasury, is \$9,691,805 61; from which deduct repayments, \$1,799,913 67, and there is left the sum of \$7,891,891 94, as the expenditures on all objects under the control of this department.

Of this amount there was expended for "special objects," the sum of \$2,368,169 11; leaving as the true expenditures, for the support of the navy and marine corps, the sum of \$5,523,722 83.

The unexpended balance in the treasury, of the appropriations for the naval service, marine corps, and special objects under the control of this department, on the 30th of June, 1850, was \$3,839,253 84, all of which will be required to meet outstanding obligations due from the appropriations made for that year.

I commend to the attention of Congress the reforms introduced in the supply of provisions by the efficient chief of that bureau, and his suggestions as to others, which can only be effected by legislation. Likewise to the statement made by the chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, that the number of effective medical officers in the service is insufficient for its wants, and his recommendation that those unfitted for duty shall be retired, and their places supplied by new appointments. I also concur in his recommendation that the sum of \$200,000, part of the Navy Hospital fund, be invested in stocks as a protection against loss, and to secure a regular income.

The augmentation of the marine corps, as proposed in the report of its chief, deserves, likewise, the early attention of Congress. By a revision of the complement table of ships of war, it is believed that the number of landsmen might be reduced, and that of the rank and file of the marines increased, so as to provide for the deficiency now existing in this corps, without detriment to the service, or additional expense to the government.

I am, with the highest respect, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM A. GRAHAM,

Secretary of the Navy

To the President.