

**REPORT**  
OF  
**THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.**

---

NAVY DEPARTMENT,

December, 1832.

*To the President of the United States:*

SIR: It is a source of much gratification to be able to lay before you an exposition of the transactions of this Department the past year, evincing great prosperity.

New evidences have been furnished of the importance of our Navy in sustaining the American character abroad, and in extending and protecting some of our most valuable interests.

Besides the ordinary aid given to commerce by the presence of a respectable force on each of our foreign stations, the cruising grounds of some of our squadrons have been enlarged; convoy, and relief in distress, have been occasionally afforded; threatened aggressions have, in some cases, been deterred, and, in others, the commission of actual injuries has been seasonably investigated and stopped.

In the performance of these duties, frequently very delicate and difficult, our officers have, in general, displayed commendable prudence, and always their accustomed promptitude, zeal, and bravery.

Connected with the Mediterranean station, the only collision that has arisen between any part of our squadron and other powers, took place at Madeira between the Constellation and the blockading vessels of Donna Maria. The commander of the Constellation, under instructions to show entire impartiality towards the contending claimants to the throne of Portugal, and at the same time to respect, in all places, the actual government, found, on his arrival at that island, the force employed in its blockade apparently insufficient for the due investment of the place, and partial in its indulgences towards the flags of other nations. Under these impressions as to the facts, and under his general orders for the efficient protection of our commerce, he came to a conclusion, very fortunate for those interested in the trade to Madeira, that while such a state of things continued, he was justified in extending assistance to our merchantmen to enter the port of their destination with their perishable cargoes.

The addition to the Mediterranean squadron, of the frigates Constellation and United States, and the return of the Ontario, are the only material changes in it since my last annual report. The Delaware has been prepared for sea with a view to that station; but it was deemed expedient not to despatch her, unless some emergency occurred, until she could undergo a thorough examination in one of our dry docks. The Brandywine, Boston, and Concord, being expected home the present winter, their places will probably, in a few months, be supplied by the Delaware.

The chastisement inflicted by the frigate *Potomac* on the piratical Malays in February last, is the sole occurrence of importance among our vessels that compose the squadron in the Pacific. The orders given to her commander required him to ascertain, by careful inquiries, that the information received here before his sailing, concerning the plunder and massacre committed on board the ship *Friendship*, was not exaggerated. He was further directed to satisfy himself that those outrages were not provoked by any misconduct on the part of the Americans; and that the offenders were, as represented and believed to be true, a race of a character so lawless and savage as not to come within the scope of regular diplomatic intercourse. He was also instructed, if practicable, first to demand and obtain indemnity for the injury committed, and the punishment of those most conspicuous in these barbarous atrocities. It has been gratifying to learn, by accounts from that quarter of the world, subsequent to the visit of the *Potomac* to Sumatra, that the result of that visit has been to silence all exultation and menaces of further violence from those sea robbers; to draw from them acknowledgments of past errors, and promises of future forbearance from like offences, and to insure, as yet, a scrupulous fulfilment of those promises. But to guard against their perfidy, orders were given that the *Potomac* should be followed by a detachment from the Brazilian squadron, part of which detachment has since sailed; and has instructions to touch not only at Sumatra, but such places in India, China, and on the eastern coast of Africa, as may be conducive to the security and prosperity of our important commercial interests in those regions.

The stop put to the seizure of our vessels at the Falkland islands, in January last, was effected by a ship of the Brazilian squadron, under general instructions from this department, to take all proper measures for the effectual security of our commerce and fisheries. Special orders on that subject had been previously prepared and forwarded by this department; but they had not arrived at the time of the prompt and successful interference by the *Lexington*. Our commerce and fisheries have not been molested in that quarter since that occurrence. The *Boxer*, another vessel of the same squadron, after visiting Liberia in Africa, has, at a critical moment, extended our naval protection to the neighborhood of Para and Maranhão. The schooner *Enterprise*, in the late disturbances at Montevideo, was also placed in a position of much delicacy, and succeeded in furnishing very opportune assistance, not only to our own merchants, but to the constituted authorities of the country. Nothing else of interest, connected with the Brazilian station, has occurred since my last annual report. But the unsettled condition of South America, and the security of our commerce in India, have led to an increase of our force on that station, by the addition of the *Peacock*, *Boxer*, and *Enterprise*.

The West India squadron has been employed in an active and useful manner; and particularly so while on the coast of Mexico. During the commotions in that country the past season, this squadron yielded very efficient protection to our own citizens, and was, on some occasions, fortunately enabled to proffer security to the residents from other nations. The recent seizure of the *Montezuma*, a vessel belonging to Santa Anna, was made by the *Grampus* without any special instructions from this department: but on the facts reported to her commander, the seizure was deemed by him both necessary and proper in the execution of his general orders to shield our flag, our citizens, and their property, from unlawful aggressions.

A part of this squadron has recently been detached to visit the Western islands, the Cape de Verds, and, if necessary, the coast of Africa, in pursuit of a piratical vessel which, in September last, robbed the American merchant brig Mexican of a large amount of property near the Azores. This measure, aided by instructions to the commanders of vessels on their return from the Mediterranean, and to those now in the West Indies, as well as to our consuls at Madeira, Lisbon, and Gibraltar, to use all practicable vigilance in the detection and punishment of the authors of this wanton outrage, will, it is hoped, terminate successfully; and, in any event, will tend to prevent any other attempts of a like character, from the increased impracticability of escape with impunity. The only changes in the vessels of this squadron have been the withdrawal of the Fairfield, Vincennes, and Erie, for repairs, and the substitution of the St. Louis and Vandalia.

For reasons suggested in the last annual report, it has been my endeavor to keep one of our vessels in commission remaining constantly on some portion of our own coast. The schooner Experiment, after sundry trials of her qualities, which proved in a great degree satisfactory, and after a visit, during the past season, to most of our home stations, is still retained on our Atlantic sea-board, ready to be despatched to such quarter of the world as any new incident may show to be most expedient.

Of the three small vessels heretofore employed in the protection of our live oak, there seems now to be little doubt but one unfortunately foundered in a severe gale during the previous year. The other two, under a belief that their further employment would not be so beneficial as to justify the expenses they occasion, have been recalled. One ceased to be in commission in May last, and was ordered to be sold; and the same disposition will be made of the other on her arrival at Norfolk.

A list of all our vessels now in commission, with their stations and commanders, is annexed, (A). The vessels not in commission have all been recently examined by the Navy Board; and most of those in ordinary, as well as all on the stocks, have been found to be in a good state of preservation. For their condition in detail, reference may be had to the documents annexed, (M and N). The acts of Congress, relative to the rebuilding of the Macedonian, and the purchase of timber to rebuild, at some future period, the Java and Cyane, have both been executed as far as practicable. The rebuilding of the former has already been commenced, and contracts have been made for timber for the others.

The collection of live oak frames, and of other timber suitable for other parts of vessels, under the act for the gradual improvement of the Navy, is in progress as rapidly as the supply of live oak timber from private lands, and the erection of sheds at the different yards to preserve our materials of that character, render judicious.

On the subject of vessels, the department has nothing more, of much importance, to remark, except the repetition of its earnest desire, expressed in the last annual report, for an appropriation to build a few steam batteries. In addition to the considerations then urged in favor of early attention to this subject, may properly be suggested the circumstances, that much time will be required, not only to procure their peculiar equipments, but to introduce the system of discipline, somewhat novel, which may be necessary for their crews; to enable our officers to acquire the new and necessary science suitable for the supervision and management of steam batteries, and to train a distinct class of persons in the service to become their engineers. It

is moreover ascertained, that these batteries can be so constructed as to prove highly useful during peace at the principal navy yards, in towing public vessels towards their destination, at the time of their departure and return, under all winds and tides, and in the frequent and indispensable transportation of men, stores, and provisions.

The property on hand at the several yards, consisting chiefly of timber, iron, copper, and arms, continues to increase in amount. The whole now exceeds in value the sum of five millions five hundred and seventy-nine thousand nine hundred and seventeen dollars, (B). Independent of what is provided for repairs of vessels, we have on hand the frames for four ships of the line, seven frigates, four sloops, and three steam batteries; nine hundred tons of iron, four hundred and fifty-eight tons of copper, ninety-three tons of lead; two thousand two hundred and thirty-two cannon and caronades; three thousand five hundred and four muskets—about thrice as many pistols and cutlasses; two hundred and twenty-eight thousand nine hundred and eight round and double headed cannon balls, besides grape and cannister; thirty-five thousand six hundred pounds of powder; one hundred and ninety-eight thousand three hundred and eighty-two pounds of sulphur, and about double that quantity in nitre. For further particulars under this head, reference may be had to the annexed report, (C). Increased attention has been bestowed on the due arrangement and preservation of all these materials; and new securities for their proper use and the accountability for them, will probably be introduced into the revised naval regulations now preparing.

Without much previous attention to the extent and quality of these materials, it will never be in our power, in any future emergency, to develop suddenly, and employ efficiently, the great naval capacities of this country for annoyance of an enemy, and for protection to our commerce, as well as for maritime defence.

The act of Congress for the gradual improvement of the navy will expire next March; and this occasion is seized to recommend the continuance of its appropriations for the purchase of these materials, as well as for other valuable purposes, at least six years longer. If these materials are gradually collected, and well preserved, in such quantities as to enable us, in addition to the force usually in commission, forthwith, in any crisis, to put our vessels that may be in ordinary and on the stocks, into a condition for active and efficient service, and to build and equip suitably such other vessels as our great commercial marine will assist us fully to man, we shall then exercise that true foresight and that sound and sagacious economy in respect to this branch of the public service, which all experience of our own and other nations recommends, and which the present flourishing state of our country justifies. Without any increase of the number of seamen actually serving in the navy during peace, every sailor on our two thousand miles of seaboard, on our noble rivers and vast lakes, can then be considered as in a course of training to man the numerous vessels of war, which our interests, our rights, and our honor, may at any future period require us to arm; and our countless steam vessels on the navigable waters connected with some of our frontiers, could then, in any emergency, be at once supplied with the proper munitions of war, and be so far equipped as floating batteries, that they would furnish new and powerful aid, not only in the rapid transportation of men and stores, but in repressing hostile depredations near our shores, and in repelling an invading foe.

Though nominally, as to vessels in commission, only the fifth or sixth naval power in the world, and not expending over one-eighth of the annual amount paid by some nations to maintain a naval establishment, yet, if we look to the true elements of naval power, to our ships in ordinary and on the stocks, to our materials for building and equipment collected and collecting, to our large commercial marine, whether of merchant vessels or steamboats, to our flourishing fisheries, our extended sea coast and excellent harbors, to our large number of navigable rivers and inland seas, and, at the same time, to our position in regard to other nations, with few neighbors bordering on us by land, and an ocean rolling between us and most of the governments with whom we are likely to have collision, it must be manifest that our greatest exposure and danger are on the water, and that our means of attack and defence there, if duly husbanded and developed, will probably always prove equal to sustain us with credit in any hostilities into which the convulsions of the world may hereafter plunge our peaceful confederacy.

The buildings at the different yards, contemplated by the estimates of last year, have been commenced; and such sums as are wanted to complete them, and to begin others necessary for the accommodation of the officers, the construction and repairs of vessels, and for the safety of the public property, are included in the estimates for the ensuing year.

The appropriation, at the last session, for the survey of Narragansett Bay, received immediate attention. The survey has been completed, and the chart is now preparing. When finished, it will be submitted, for the purpose of being laid before Congress.

The liberal appropriations made at the last session in aid of the navy hospital fund, have been partly expended; and when the buildings are finished and furnished, they will conduce greatly to the health and comfort of their meritorious inmates, and reflect much credit on the humanity and benevolence of the country. Measures have been adopted to obtain, if practicable, the release of jurisdiction from the States over the several hospital sites, with a view to prevent the burden and annoyance of taxes, and the obstructions to due discipline in the establishments.

The navy hospital, navy pension, and privateer pension funds, since being placed exclusively under the charge of this department, have all received careful attention; and the present prosperous condition, especially of the two first, will be made the subject of a separate report, to be submitted to Congress in a few days. The payment of nine thousand dollars on the third of March, 1829, for the site of the navy hospital at Norfolk, having been made out of the appropriation for pay and subsistence; instead of the navy hospital fund, and on a deed of conveyance deemed exceptionable in its form, the special interposition of Congress to arrange the subject was held to be proper by my predecessor; and, on that account, the subject still remains unadjusted on the books of the Fourth Auditor.

The entire completion of the dry docks has been prevented by an accident to the coffer dam of one of them, the prevalence of the cholera in the neighborhood of the other, and the extraordinary severity of the weather during the last winter. But, it is believed, that the solidity and durability of the works, generally, will be increased by the delay; and that, during the ensuing season, we shall be enabled, with safety and great advantage, to use both the dry docks in the examination and repair of our public vessels. The report annexed will furnish the details on this subject, as well as the other proceedings under the act for the gradual improvement of the

navy, (D). A civil engineer will be needed in the future superintendence of these docks; and he could otherwise be very useful in preparing plans and estimates for the erection of the various buildings and other public works at the different yards. Any increase in our expense by the services of such an officer will be avoided, as the estimates of this year omit two of the number of naval constructors, whose labors at this time are not required. It will be seen by the general estimates for the naval service the ensuing year, which are annexed, (E), that no other essential change is contemplated as to officers, except a small reduction in the number of captains and midshipmen, and a small increase in that of masters commandant. The number of lieutenants is only apparently lessened, as it had' been during the year no larger than the present estimates contemplate; while the actual number of midshipmen has been the same as in the estimates of former years. The estimates extend this year to the purchase of suitable libraries for the officers in schooners, as well as in larger vessels; and include schoolmasters for all the sloops. Until Congress may think proper to make provision for educating the younger officers, other than the present course of instruction on board the largest vessels, and at two of the yards, with an occasional extension of it to another, earnest and additional efforts should, in my opinion, be made, to convert every vessel as large as a sloop into a school efficient as possible, in bestowing on the midshipmen that elementary science and literature, as well as that discipline, necessary to qualify them for the honorable discharge of the higher and more responsible duties of the service. If, in such a floating academy, confined to the deck of a ship of war, they may fail to acquire in so great perfection some of the appropriate graces of their rank, it is a consolation to reflect, that, by furnishing them with improved means, what they may acquire in theoretic information will be increased in quantity and excellence, will be sooner tested by experiment, and thus become more strongly incorporated with the memory and judgment; while much less will intervene to tempt them from that rigid discipline, and that ardent devotion to the ocean, its scenes, its dangers, and glories, which should be inseparable from their arduous and adventurous profession.

The estimates for improvements at the different yards, and for repairs of vessels, are somewhat smaller than those of the previous year. But while retrenching, wherever practicable, all unnecessary expenditure, it has been my constant endeavor to avoid weakening the efficiency of the whole naval establishment, either through an inconsiderate impression that it is, as in some older countries, already arrived at maturity, or overgrown and unwieldy; or that, from some other cause, it is not entitled to share in the gradual progress and improvements which the advancing spirit of the age, and the increasing power of a great and growing people, seem to require from all our useful public establishments.

As respects the pecuniary concerns of the navy, generally, it gives me sincere satisfaction to state, that, during the year, not a single dollar is known to the department to have been misappropriated, or lost by misconduct on the part of any of our agents or other officers.

By the changes made under the new arrangement for drawing bills of exchange abroad, either on England or this country, as most advantageous, and by the exercise of more care in our agents concerning the forms of business and the communication of seasonable advices, all our payments abroad have been effected without delay or sacrifices. No bills of exchange

have been protested; the credit of our drafts has become good on every station, and on the two where most depressed heretofore, they have advanced considerably above par, (F).

By means of the seasonable appropriation at the last session of Congress, for the arrearages which had been some years accruing, and by extreme caution since in relation to charges on the enumerated contingent fund, we have as yet been enabled to pay promptly all the demands under that head. No transfer has been made to aid it, in any case, under the temporary act of the last session.

Should Congress place the enumerated contingent fund on the footing heretofore, and now recommended, and which new charges upon it in the present estimates render still more urgent, and which the experience of the last ten years, as shewn by repeated bills for arrearages, and by irregular transfers from other appropriations to aid it, proves to be indispensable to meet the usual demands upon it in the ordinary contingencies of the service, there is but little doubt that the present desirable state of our moneyed accounts will long continue.

There is now on hand unexpended, of previous naval appropriations, about a million and a half of dollars; but probably most of this sum will be requisite to adjust outstanding claims, and complete the specific objects for which some of the appropriations were made.

On one subject, connected with our pecuniary matters, and which has heretofore excited some sensibility both in and out of Congress, from other considerations as well as economy, it affords me gratification to add, that our public vessels have returned so seasonably during the year, that no expense whatever has been incurred in the transportation, from foreign countries, of seamen whose terms of service had been allowed to expire abroad.

In respect to the preservation of live oak, the department, as before suggested, has not deemed it proper to employ any longer the small vessels engaged in that service. In two of the seven districts, the general examinations having been completed, it has been considered not advisable to retain the agents in them at a large expenditure, merely for the preservation of the timber. It is expected that the examinations of three of the remaining districts will be finished during the present winter; and of the other two, in the course of the ensuing year. The general results from these examinations, and my opinion in detail on the plan most eligible to be pursued hereafter on this interesting subject, will soon be presented to Congress in a special report, prepared in conformity to a request contained in a resolution of the House of Representatives passed at the last session.

Our seamen have, in general, evinced a strong and increasing attachment to the service. Great care has, with success, been taken to prevent their times of enlistment from expiring abroad. No occasion has arisen to open the rendezvous at home, for some months. Whenever opened during the year, an ample supply of men has been readily obtained. The habits of our seamen are improving in respect to temperance. In most of our ships they have generally enjoyed excellent health, and the visitations among them of that alarming scourge, the Asiatic cholera, have been neither frequent nor severe. Corporal punishment has become less common and less necessary. The present ration of provision issued for their sustenance, cannot lawfully be changed by the department alone, but could be altered by Congress so as to increase its variety, its nutriment, and healthful qualities. The ingredients recommended in a special report from this department, at the last ses-

sion, would be no more expensive than those now composing the rations, and much more acceptable to most seamen.

Efforts have been made to apportion an equal share of the emoluments and hardships of the service to all officers of similar rank and date. Opportunities to test the fitness of all in subordinate stations, have been, and will continue to be, furnished, as fast as the wants of the naval establishment may permit. It is essential to its prosperity, that those officers found entirely unfit for duty, should be placed on half pay, or retire altogether from the service; as their unfitness may have arisen either from wounds and infirmities which happened in the discharge of duty, or from censurable causes.

Strict discipline among the officers has generally been attempted, tempered, it is hoped, with all reasonable indulgences. Such discipline has been found not only more beneficial to the officers themselves, and the high reputation of the service, but a most efficient instrument in the control and reformation of the seamen, who seldom complain of a system of government extended with firmness and impartiality to their superiors.

The annexed order (G) has been issued during the year, with a view to furnish increased incentives to vigilance in discipline on board our vessels in commission, and as an additional means of obtaining more accurate information on the peculiar merits of officers in command, whose modesty will generally allow only the report of their good works, through the inspection of others to recommend them.

No appropriation was made the last session of Congress for the suppression of the slave trade; but the department has been able to meet all the demands growing out of that subject, by the balances on hand from former years, as may be seen in the annexed statement, (H). In consequence of a supposed piracy on the coast of Africa, the Boxer visited Liberia in April last. The report of her commander is annexed, (I). As Congress did not, at their last session, make any provision in regard to the public property there, the department has deemed it expedient to sell such of it as was perishable and decaying, and to direct a careful examination, by our agent resident in that country, and an expression of his opinion, as to the future disposition of the residue. It may be proper to have, this year, at least a moiety of the last appropriation of ten thousand dollars made, so as to enable the Government to meet any contingent calls which may happen in the further suppression of this inhuman trade.

The rules and regulations for the administration of the civil branch of this department, mentioned in the last annual report, have been collected, arranged, and printed. From their subsequent distribution among the naval and civil officers connected with the service, all the benefit anticipated to the relief of the department and the officers, from much unnecessary correspondence and many unpleasant decisions, have been fully realized. The code of regulations for the naval branch, is undergoing revision and enlargement, under a resolution passed by Congress at its last session, and will be submitted for approbation when completed, (K).

A list of the deaths, dismissions, and resignations, the past year, is annexed, (L).

The condition of the marine corps, as to its organization and size, as well as the allowances to its officers, and the ruinous state of some of its barracks, have heretofore attracted the attention of this department and of Congress. But, except the small appropriation to rebuild the barracks at Philadelphia, and which is now in a course of expenditure, legislation has not been com-



pleted, though very desirable, on these subjects so interesting to the corps, and so intimately connected, in my opinion, with its future services and usefulness.

To avoid unnecessary repetition, and what might perhaps be deemed indecorous importunity, several other subjects intimately connected with the welfare of our naval establishment, are left to the decision of the proper authorities, on the suggestions and considerations heretofore submitted by this department. Full confidence is cherished that they will receive all that attention which the acknowledged importance of many of them deserves, and that nothing exists in the present state of the establishment, or of the country, which should prevent the continuance of all that liberality towards the navy, which it has so often experienced, as well as merited, both from the Government and the public.

Yours, respectfully,

LEVI WOODBURY.