who would very probably be concerned in attacking it. I told col. Sterrett that I conceived the smallness of our force was calculated rather to encourage than intimidate a mob, and suggest the propriety of retiring to some private place where our numbers could not be known, & from whence we could as easily be marched to the jail; this he refused to do, but sent the adjutant to inform you of it and receive your orders; who returned from your house with information that you were not there. Soon afterward in the absence of the Col. I directed Mr. Cheston to go to the jail to you; make the above communication, and request you would order us into a private place or dismiss us, as I was firmly pursuaded of the improbability of increasing our numbers and that the few we had were more likely to prevent than accomplish the object we had in view. Mr. Cheston informed me upon his return to Gay street that he had no opportunity of making the communication to you, but that you had directed him to request Col. Sterrett to dismiss the regiment, which was soon after complied with. I have no hesitation in declaring that I then approved of the orders for dismissal, as we never had at any time during the evening forty men under arms in our regiment, and these were ordered to take no ball cartridges; and I am satisfied there were at least four or five times that number of people collected around us. After we were dismissed Col. Sterrett proposed to me that we should change our clothes and repair to the jail, to which I consented; after we separated I could not again find him, but was informed he had gone towards North Gay street, and I presumed he had gone to the jail; I met Mr. N. C. Hall who agreed to go there with me; on our way we met you in Holliday street and you informed us that all was tranquil at the jail; that there were few people there and those appeared to be orderly and discreet; and that there was no necessity for my going, as you were satisfied the gentlemen were perfectly safe; so much so, that you did not intend to return there again. Upon this I returned home and had no further conversation with you until some days after the dreadful massacre was perpetrated at the jail.

Your obedient humble servant,
R. K. HEATH.

United States Frigate Constitution, off Boston Light, August 25th, 1812.

SIR—I have the honor to inform you that after leaving Boston Light on the 2d inst. the date of my last letter to you, I stood to the eastward along the coast, in hopes to fall in with one of the enemy's frigates, which was reported to be cruizing in that direction, the day before I left Boston. I passed near the coast, as far down as the Bay of Fundy, but saw nothing. I then run off Halifax and Cape Sables, & remained near there for three or four days without seeing any thing, which made me determine to change my situation to the eastward towards Newfoundland. I accordingly bore up, and run to the eastward under all sail, passing near the Isle of Sables, and hauling in to [illegible] near Cape Race, to intercept the ships of the enemy bound either to or from Quebec or Halifax, and to be in a situation to recapture such of our vessels as they might be sending in.

On the 10th inst. being off Cape Race, I fell in with a light merchant brig, bound to Halifax, from Newfoundland; & as she was not worth sending in, I took the crew on board and set her on fire. On the 11th, I fell in with the British brig Adeone, from Nova Scotia, bound to England, loaded with timber. I took the crew out of her and set her on fire, and made sail to take a station nearer Cape Race, where we continued cruizing until the morning of the 15th, at day light; when five sail were in sight ahead of us, apparently a small convoy. I gave chace under a press of sail, and soon found that we gained on them very fast, and discovered that one of them was a ship of war; at sun rise they tacked, & stood on the same tack with us. By this time we could plainly discover that the ship of war had a brig in tow. At 8, coming up very fast with the ship, and could see that she had cast off the brig that she had in tow, and had set her on fire, and had ordered a second brig to stand before the wind to separate them. The ship of war making sail to windward, I gave chace to a ship which appeared to be under convoy; when we came up with her, she proved to be a British ship, prize to the Dolphin privateer, of Salem. She had been spoken by the ship of war, but we came up with them before they had time to put men on board and take charge of her. Whilst our boats were boarding this vessel, the ship of war had got nearly hull down from us; and understanding from one of the prisoners that she was a very fast sailer, I found it would not be possible to come up with her before night, or perhaps not then; I therefore gave chace to the brig that run before the wind, determined to destroy all his convoy, we soon found we came up fast with the brig, and that they were making every exertion to get off by throwing overboard all the lumber, water casks, &c.

At 2 P. M. we brought to the chace, and found her to be the American brig Adeline, from Liverpool, loaded with dry goods, &c. prize to the British sloop of war Avenger. I took the British prize master and crew out and put midshipmon Madison and a crew on board, with orders to get into the nearest port he could make. From the prize master of this vessel I learnt that the brig burnt by the sloop of war belonged to New York, and was loaded with hemp, duck, &c. last from Jutland, having gone in there in distress.

Having chased so far to the eastward as to make it impossible to come up with the sloop of war, I determined to change my cruizing ground, as I found by some of the prisoners that came from this vessel, that the squadron that chased us off New York, were on the western edge of the Grand Bank, not far distant from me. I accordingly stood to the southward, intending to pass near Bermuda, and cruise off our southern coast.—Saw nothing till the night of the 18th, at 1-2 past 9, P. M. discovered a sail very near us, it being dark; made sail and gave chace, & could see that she was a brig. At 11, bro't her to, and sent a boat on board, found her to be the American privateer Decatur, belonging to Salem, with a crew of one hundred and eight men and fourteen guns, twelve of which she had thrown overboard whilst we were in chase of him. The captain came on board, and informed me that he saw the day before a ship of war standing to the southward, and that she could not be far from us; at 12, P. M. made sail to the southward, intending if possible to fall in with her. The privateer stood in for Cape Race, intending to cruize there, and take ships by boarding, as he had lost all his guns but two. The above is a memorandum of what took place on board the Constitution under my command, from the time we left Boston up to the 18th instant, which I hope will meet your approbation.

I have the honor to be,
With great respect,
Sir,
Your obedient servant,
ISAAC HULL.

The Hon. PAUL HAMILTON.
Secretary of the Navy, Washington City.

LETTER FROM COMMODORE ROGERS TO THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY.

U. S. Frigate President,
Boston, September 1, 1812.

SIR,

I had the honor yesterday of informing you of the arrival of the squadron, and now to state the result and particulars of our cruise.

Previous to leaving New-York on the 21st of June, I heard that a British convoy had sailed from Jamaica for England on or about the 20th of the preceding month, and on being informed of the declaration of war against G. Britain I determined in the event of Com. Decatur joining me with the U. States, Congress and Argus, as you had directed, to go in pursuit of them.

The U. States, Congress and Argus, did join me on the 21st; with which vessels, this ship and the Hornet, I accordingly sailed in less than an hour after I received your orders of the 13th of June, accompanied by your official communication of the declaration of war.

On leaving New York I shaped our course south easterly, in the expectation falling in with vessels, by which I should hear of the before mentioned convoy, & the following night met with an American brig that gave me the sought for information: the squadron now crowded sail in pursuit, but the next morning was taken out of its course by the pursuit of the British frigate, that I since find was the Belvidere relative to which I beg leave to refer you to the enclosed extract from my journal: after repairing as far as possible the injury done by the Belvidere to our spars and rigging, we again crowded all sail and resumed our course in pursuit of the convoy but did not receive further intelligence of it until the 29th of June, on the western edge of the banks of Newfoundland where we spoke an American schooner, the master of which reported that he had 2 days before passed them in lat. 43 long. 55 steering to the eastward; I was surprised to find that the convoy was still so far to the eastward of us but was urged, however, as well by what I considered my duty as by inclination, to continue the pursuit.

On the 1st of July, a little to the eastward of Newfoundland bank, we fell in with quantities of cocoa nut shells orange peels, &c. which indicated that the convoy were not far distant, and we pursued it with zeal, although frequently taken out of our course by vessels it was necessary to chace, without gaining any further intelligence until the 9th of July, in latitude 45 30, longtitude 23, we captured the British private armed brig Dolphin, of Jersey, and was informed by some of her crew that they had seen the convoy the preceding evening, the weather was not clear at the time, but that they had counted 85 sail, and that the force charged with its protection consisted of one two decker, a frigate, a sloop of war, and a brig.

This was the last intelligence I received of the before mentioned convoy although its pursuit was continued until the 13th of July, being then within 18 or 20 hours sail of the British channel.

From this we steered for the Island of Madeira passed close by it on the 21st of July: thence near the Azores, and saw Corvas and Floras; thence steered for the banks of Newfoundland; and from the latter place (by the way of Cape Sable) to this port, it having become indispensable necessary (by the time we reached our own coast) to make the first convenient port in the U. States; owing, I am sorry to say, to that wretched disease the scurvy having made its appearance on board of the vessels, most generally to a degree seriously alarming.

From the western part of the Banks of Newfoundland to our making the Island of Madeira the weather was such, at least six days out of seven, as to obscure, from our discovery every object that we did not pass within four or five miles of, and indeed for several days together the fog was so thick as to prevent our seeing each other, even at cables length asunder, more than twice or thrice in the 24 hours.

From the time of our leaving the U. States until our arrival here we chased every vessel we saw, and you will not be a little astonished when I inform you that altho' we bro't too every thing we did chase, with the exception of four vessels, we only made seven captures and one re-capture.

It is truly an unpleasant task to be obliged to make a communication thus barren of benefit of our country: the only consolation I individually feel on the occasion being derived from knowing that our being at sea obliged the enemy to concentrate a considerable portion of his most active force and thereby prevent his capturing an incalculable amount of American property that would otherwise have fallen a sacrifice.

I am aware of the anxiety you must have experinced at not hearing from me for such a length of time, but this I am sure you will not attribute in any degree to neglect, when I inform you that not a single proper opportunity occurred from the time of leaving the U. States until our return.

Mr. Newcomb, who will deliver you this, you will find an intelligent young man, capable of giving such information as you may deem of any moment, he will at the same time deliver you a chart shewing the tract in which we cruized: Annexed is a list of vessels captured, re-captured and burnt.

The four vessels we chased and did not come up with was, the Belvidere, a small pilot boat schooner supposed to be an American privateer, the hermaphrodite privateer brig Yankee, which we lost sight of in a fog, but whose character we afterwards learnt and a frigate supposed to be British, that we chased on the 28th ult. near the shoal of George's Bank, and should certainly have come up with, had we have had the advantage of two hours more day light.

On board of the several vessels of the squadron there are between 80 and 100 prisoners taken from the vessels we captured during our late cruize: The government not having any agent for prisoners here, I shall send them to Com. Bainbridge, to be disposed or in such manner as best appears with the interest of the U. States, and which I hope may meet your approbation.

With the greatest respect,
I have the honor to be, Sir,
Your obedient servant,
JOHN RODGERS.

The Hon. PAUL HAMILTON,
Secretary of the Navy, Washington.

List of vessels captured, re captured, and destroyed.

July 2d. Brig Traveller, 277 tons, Jas. Amery, master, of Newcastle, Eng. 10 men, bound from the Bay of Fundy, owned by George Dunn, George Watson, Matthew Dunn, and John Stocker, cargo timber,—Burnt.

July 4th. Brig Dutchess of Portland, 9 guns, 11 men, of Newcastle, Eng. bound from Newcastle to Nova Scotia, in ballast Burnt.

July 9th. Brig Dolphin, 241 tons, 12 guns, 2 men, Philip Cabbot, of Jersey, Eng. bound from Jersey to Newfoundland, in ballast and some cargo, owned by Winter and Nicell.—Sent into the U. States.

July 24th. Ship John, of Lancaster, 10 guns, and 30 men bound from London to Martinique, in ballast.—Sent into the United States.

August 2d. Brig Argo, 168 tons 10 guns and 10 men, Wm. Middleton, master, of London, bound from Pernambucco, to London, laden with cotton, fustic, and about [illegible] in gold.—Ordered for the U. States.

August 17th. Schr Adeline, of London, 10 men, bound from Hayti to London, laden with coffee.—Ordered for the United States.

August 25th. Schr Betsey, of Marblehead, from Naples, laden with brandy, recaptured from the Guerriere, who had ordered her for Halifax; 4 men and midship man (prize master.)—Ordered her for the U. States.

JNO. RODGERS.

COPIES OF LETTERS.

Received at the Navy Department from Captain PORTER, of the U. States' frigate Essex of 32 guns.

At sea August 17, 1812.

SIR,

I have the honor to inform you that on the 13th his Britannic majesty's sloop of war Alert, captain T. L. P. Laugharne, ran down on our weather quarter, gave three cheers, and commenced an action (if so trifling a skirmish deserves the name) and after 3 minutes firing struck her colors, with 7 feet water in her hold, much cut to pieces, and three men wounded.

I need not inform you that the officers and crew of the Essex behaved as I trust all Americans will in such cases, and it is only to be regretted that so much zeal and activity could not have been displayed on an occasion that would have done them more honor. The Essex has not received the slighest injury.

The Alert was out for the purpose of taking the Hornet!

I have the honor to be, with great respect, your ob't servant,
(Signed) D. PORTER.

HON. PAUL HAMILTON.
Sec. of the Navy, Washington.

At sea, August 20.

SIR,

Finding myself much embarrassed by the Alert from the great number of prisoners we have already made (about 500) I concluded that before our arrival in America the number would be considerably augmented, and as I found my provisions and water getting short, and being well satisfied that a plan had been organised by them for rising on the ship in the event of an engagement; I considered it to be the interest of my country to get clear of them as speedily as possible, particularly as I was well assured that immediately on their arrival in St. John's an equal number of my country men would be released and find a sure and immediate conveyance. I therefore drew up written stipulations corresponding with the accompanying letters; threw all the guns of the Alert overboard; withdrew from her all the men belonging to the Essex; appointed Lieut. J. P. Wilmer to command her as a cartel, put all my prisoners on board her and dispatched her for St. Johns, in Newfoundland, with orders to proceed from thence to New York with such Americans as he may receive in exchange.

At a more suitable opportunity I shall do myself the honor to lay before you copies of every paper relative to this transaction, and sincerely hope that my conduct in this affair may meet with your approbation.

As the Essex has been so annoying about Bermuda, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland, I expect I shall have to run the gauntlet thro' their cruisers; you may however rest assured that all a ship of her size can do shall be done, and whatever may be our fate our country shall never blush for us.

I have the honor, &c.
(Signed) D. PORTER.

Hon. PAUL HAMILTON,
Secretary of the Navy,
Washington.

[The following are the papers accompanying the preceding: viz my two letters to captain Laugharne, with his answer, verbal and written, to the first; a copy of the passport given to lieut. Wilmer and a copy of Capt. Laugharne's certificate, certifying to the number of prisoners put on board the Cartel Alert.]

August 18, 1812.

SIR—An arrangement has suggested itself to me, which, in my opinion, is calculated to advance the interest of the United States, as well as that of his Britannic majesty, and if acceded to by you shall be immediately put in execution: should you object to the terms they will not after this be repeated, and the treatment usual to prisoners of war will in future be observed towards your crew.

ART. 1. The Alert to be deprived of all her armament, and to proceed under charge of an officer of that ship as a Cartel to such British port as you may deem most adviseable, and to take your officers and crew, together with the British captains and mates of merchant vessels with their crew, now prisoners on board this ship.

ART. 2d. The officers to go on parole of honor, not to serve against the United States of America during the existing war, untill regularly exchanged. The captains and mates of merchant vessels with their crews, as well as the petty officers, seamen, marines, landsmen and boys composing your crew to be exchanged immediately on their arrival in a British port for an equal number of equal grades of American prisoners, and are not to serve against the United States until the exchange takes place.

ART. 3d. The swords of the officers to be returned to them.

ART. 4th. You to remain as a pledge for the faithful fulfilment of the foregoing articles.

I have the honor, &c.
(Signed) D. PORTER.

Capt. T. L. P. Laugharne,
late commander of his B. M.
sloop of war Alert—Present.

After delivering the preceding letter to Captain Laugharne, he verbally informed me, "That his officers preferred remaining with him and sharing his fate, and as he was confident that some of his ship's company were much prejudiced against him, he did not wish them to go to Newfoundland, until he could be present to appear in his own justification, before they could have an opportunity of injuring his honor and reputation as an officer, both of which he held as inestimable, and as a court martial could not be held in his absence." He then wrote me the following letter:

August 18, 1812.

SIR—I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of this day's date, offering an arrangement for the officers and crew of his majesty's late sloop Alert.

In answer thereto I beg to inform you, I accept and agree to the first, second and third articles, but permit me to mention my objection to the last, as it seems by your requiring me to remain as an hostage for the performance of the preceding ones, to cast (although I am willing to believe unintentionally) an indirect suspicion on the faith of the British government, so universally known for its fulfilment of every compact entered into by its public servants.

By your allowing me to accompany my ship's company and officers, I will pledge to you mine honor to see the articles of our release fully complied with on our arrival in a British port.

Should you object to this, my officers prefer remaining with me till we are regularly exchanged.

I have the honor, &c.
(Signed)
S. L. P. LAUGHARNE,
Late commander of his majesty's sloop Alert.

Capt D. PORTER,
U. S. Frigate Essex.

August 18, 1812.

SIR—In reply to one paragraph in your letter in answer to the terms offered by me I shall observe that, having in two former instances permitted Cartels to proceed to British ports without reserving hostages, I have sufficiently evinced that I entertain the highest confidence in the honor and faith of the British government as respects the fulfilment of compacts entered into by their officers; nor should I have proposed the last article in this instance were it not that I felt a necessity for holding some pledge as a justification of my conduct to my own government for the unlimited confidence I have reposed: For the reason (however) that you have stated I am willing to yield that condition; and you may consider yourself at liberty to proceed with your officers and crew, and on the same terms.

I have the honor, &c.
(Signed) D. PORTER.

Capt. T. L. P. Laugharne,
late commander of his B. M.
sloop of war Alert.—Present.

[Here follows copies of the agreement, passport, &c. and a list of the prisoners.]

At Sea, Sept. 1st 1812.

SIR—On the afternoon of the 30th August, in latitude 36, N. longitude 62, W. discovered one of the enemy's frigates standing towards us under a press of sail, apparently with an intention of speaking us.—Stood for him under easy sail, with the ship prepared for action; apprehensive that he might not find us in the night, I hoisted a light. At 9, he made a signal, consisting of two flashes and one blue light, apparently about four miles distance from us. I continued to stand on for the point where they were seen until midnight, when not getting sight of the enemy, I concluded that it would be best to heave to for him until day light, presuming that he had done the same, or that he would at least have kept in our neighborhood; but to my great surprise and the mortification of my officers and crew (whose zeal on every occasion excites my admiration) we discovered in the morning that the bird had flown! From the latitude and longitude in which we saw this vessel, and from her fleetness, which enabled her to disappear so soon, I think it not unlikely that it was the Acasta, of 50 guns and 350 men, sent out with so much parade, accompanied by the Ring Dove of 22 guns, to cruise for the Essex! Perhaps, however, she went to seek her consort.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, your obedient servant,
D. PORTER.

Hon. Paul Hamilton,
Sec'ry of the Navy.

At sea, Sept. 5th, 1812.

SIR—On the 4th inst. off the Tail of St. George's Bank, I discovered two ships of war to the southward—the brig in chase of an American merchant ship, and I have not the slightest doubt of their being enemies—gave chace to the brig, which attempted to get past us to join the rest of the squadron; this we prevented and compelled her to stand to the northward; continued in chase until we got abreast the American ship, when we gave over chase as the wind was getting light and the brig leaving us with her sweeps out. On shewing our colors to the American merchant ship, several signal guns were fired by the ships to the southward, which made all sail in chase of us. At 4 P. M. they had gained our wake and had come up with us very fast. Calculating on making my escape by some manœuvre in the course of the night, I hoisted American colors and fired a gun to windward; the ships still continuing to gain on us and the largest being considerably to windward of the other, and about 5 miles astern of us, bearing S. by W. I determined to heave about as soon as it grew dark, and in the event of our not being able to pass him, to fire a broadside into him and lay him on board. With this view, made every arrangement and preparation, the crew in high spirits, and gave three cheers when the plan was proposed to them.—At 20 minutes after 7, hove about and stood S. E. by S. (the wind heading us off the moment we hove in stays) until 30 minutes after 8 when we bore away S. W. without seeing any thing more of them, which seems the more extraordinary as a pistol was fired by accident on board this ship at the moment when we must have been at our shortest distance from them. Finding myself thus cut off from New York and Rhode Island, I made the best of my way for the Delaware.

Considering this escape a very extraordinary one, I have the honor to enclose you a sketch of the position of the ships at three different periods, by which you will perceive at once the plan of effecting it.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, your obedient servant,
D. PORTER.

Hon. Paul Hamilton,
Secretary of the Navy.

Mouth of the Delaware, Sept. 7th, 1812.

SIR—In pursuance of your orders of the 24th June, I sailed from Sandy Hook on the 3d July, shaping my course to the southward; in the lat. of 30, 52, N. long. 66, W. I captured the brig Lamprey, 21 days from Jamaica, by her I received certain intelligence that at the time of her departure the Thetis frigate with specie and a large convoy for England was to sail on or about the 26th June, and that several running ships were also on the point of departure. I consequently made every exertion to get off St. Augustine in time to fall in with them, but without effect, as fresh gales prevailed from the South West, and increased until the 19th July, when we were compelled to scud. I succeeded in getting as far south as St. Augustine, but was baffled in every attempt to get to the westward; as the gales continued to increase and as there was no probability of getting there in time to meet the convoy, I concluded it best to endeavor to intercept it on the banks of Newfoundland, to which place I proceeded, taking Halifax in my way, and although I have been disappointed in my expectations, I hope that the facts above stated and the services rendered by the Essex may be considered a sufficient apology for departing from the letter of your instructions.

It is much to be regretted that I had not with me a sloop of war at the time I fell in with the convoy of the Minerva (as well as on other important occasions) that the ships of the convoy might be kept in play while I engaged the frigate. Had this been the case instead of taking only 200 prisoners, including the Transports' crew, I have not a doubt that we should have made prisoners of the whole of the troops, as well as the frigates and Transports' crews, which would have exceeded 2000 men.

I arrived here this morning, and shall proceed as high up as Chester, &c.

I have the honor to be, with great respect, &c. D. PORTER.

Hon. Paul Hamilton, &c.