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United States frigate Constellation
Norfolk Harbour March 17 1813

Sir

On the 9th instant I got under way with the Constellation and went down to Craney Island light. The enemy on the 10th moved up from Lynnhaven Bay with three ships of the Line and two frigates and came into Hampton Roads on the 11th where they have since been joined by two other ships of the Line. Their frigates, tenders, and armed boats are constantly in motion.

I found the gun-boats so weakly manned and so utterly incompetent to protect themselves, should the enemy make the attempt to board them in the night, to prevent their falling into their hands, I was under the necessity of withdrawing them within the fortifications of Norfolk and to return up from that position with this ship. Ten of the boats have been sent up to the Navy Yard and their men put on board of ships remaining which renders them about half manned. When the means and force of the enemy are considered, and the state of this place for a defence, it presents but a gloomy prospect of security, and although you may expect all will be done that can be done by resistance with the means of opposition which we