

Extracts from the Journals of my Campaigns
Paul Jones

At the beginning of the war, during the year 1775, I was charged with fitting out the small squadron which Congress had placed under the command of Mr. Hopkins, commander of the American navy; and I hoisted with my own hands (on board the Alfred, flagship of the commander in chief) the American flag, then unfurled for the first time.

At the same time, I told Mr. Hewes, a member of Congress and my special friend, of a project that afterward was fully planned by the two of us. The goal of this project was to seize the Island of St. Helena and for that purpose to dispatch the fleet against this island, which was very important for America to possess because the vessels of the British East India Company would not fail to drop anchor at that spot on their homeward trip; and in this manner they would inevitably fall into American hands. Because Congress had then proposed to retain two thirds of the prizes for itself, it would thus have acquired the means to carry on the war for many years. But an event of a more pressing nature prevented this project from being executed.

The depredations and cruelties that the governor, Lord Dunmore, was then inflicting in Virginia determined the Congress to send the squadron against him. Mr. Hopkins displayed neither zeal nor intelligence on this occasion; he lost so much time that his squadron found itself imprisoned by ice in the Delaware. After a two month delay, the squadron finally was freed and set sail for and seized New Providence, the principal place in the Bahama Islands. There we found a large quantity of artillery, mortars, and other implements of war, of which America was in great want. All this materiel was embarked and the governor and officers were taken prisoners, and all were brought to America. During this expedition I had the good fortune to render myself very useful to Mr. Hopkins, who was little acquainted with military operations. It was I who developed the plan that was adopted when the squadron came in sight of New Providence, where I took charge of sailing the squadron into the moorage from which it executed our enterprise.

During our return from New Providence, Mr. Hopkins encountered and captured a small bomb brig and a small armed tender, both ships of war and part of the English navy. These ships were taken without resistance. Shortly after he encountered an English frigate, the Glasgow of 24 guns, near Rhode Island; but although he had the advantage of superior power and a favorable wind, he allowed her to escape after suffering many men killed and wounded on board the Alfred and the Cabot.

The squadron with its prizes entered the port of New London in Connecticut and Mr. Hopkins, upon receiving the news that the English frigates had been driven from Newport, took advantage of the darkness of the night to proceed to Rhode Island. A council of war having dismissed the captain of the Providence, one of the ships of the squadron, Mr. Hopkins gave me written orders to take command of her and to escort some troops that were going from Rhode Island to New York to serve under the orders of General Washington. I soon completed this mission and, having refitted my ship for duty within a few days, I was ordered to escort from Rhode Island a heavy artillery train destined for the defense of New York. I then experienced great difficulty from two enemy frigates that were charged with preventing communications between the two places. I had two separate engagements with one of them, the

Cerberus of 32 guns-the first to protect my convoy and the second to shelter a vessel from St. Domingue, richly laden with munitions and stores for Congress.

Then I received orders to return to Boston to provide an escort for a number of public ships headed for Philadelphia. While executing this commission I had several encounters with warships destined for New York under the command of Lord Howe; however, I was able to preserve my convoy and I arrived in the Delaware on August 1, 1776.

On the eighth of the same month the president of Congress personally presented a commission to me as captain in the U. S. Navy. It was the first that the Congress had granted since the Declaration of Independence on the preceding fourth of July.

Congress had ordered the construction of 13 frigates, but because none of them was ready, I was ordered to put to sea alone and to engage the enemy in the manner I judged most favorable to the interests of the United States. The Providence was a lightly armed ship carrying only 70 men and 12 small cannon.

Near the Bermuda Islands I encountered the frigate Solebay of 32 guns with a convoy. She was part of Admiral Parker's squadron which had been defeated and driven from Charleston; she was bound for New York. I wanted to avoid an engagement with such a superior force but my officers and crew stubbornly insisted that it was the fleet from Jamaica, and as it was necessary at this point in the war to command by persuasion, the result was a serious engagement lasting six hours, which at the end was carried out at pistol range. An audacious maneuver being my only recourse, I tried it with success and disengaged myself.

Soon thereafter I took some important prizes and afterward sailed toward the coast of Acadia to destroy the whale and cod fisheries there.

Near Sable Island I encountered the Milford, an enemy frigate of 32 guns, with which it was impossible to avoid an engagement. We cannonaded each other from 10 o'clock in the morning until sunset, but the battle was neither as close nor as hot as that with the Solebay. At length I disengaged by passing the flats of the island, and the next day I entered the port of Canso where I did indeed destroy fisheries and shipping.

The morning of the following day I set sail for Isle de Madame where I made two raids, destroying the fisheries and burning all of the vessels that I could not carry away. This expedition took place during stormy weather and on a dangerous coast, heavily populated with residents and in a ready state of defense, but I had the good fortune to succeed despite all of these obstacles.

From there I sailed to Rhode Island, where I arrived six weeks and five days after my departure from the Delaware. During that time I had taken 16 prizes, not counting the vessels that were destroyed.

The commander in chief, who had not put to sea since the expedition of the Providence, then adopted a plan which I had proposed to him. This was, first, to destroy the enemy's coal vessels and fisheries at Isle Royale. Second, to release more than 300 American citizens who were imprisoned in the coal mines. Three vessels were designated for this service, the Alfred, the Hampden, and the Providence; but the Hampden, damaged when grounding on a rock, could not accompany me. On

November 2, 1776, I continued on my route with the Alfred, which I commanded, accompanied only by the Providence. Off the coast of Acadia I captured a vessel from Liverpool and immediately after, on the latitude of Louisbourg, I took the Mellish, a large armed vessel, having on board two English naval officers and an army captain with a company of soldiers. The Mellish was carrying 2,000 complete sets of uniforms to Canada for the army posted there under the command of Generals Carleton and Burgoyne.

The Providence then became separated from the Alfred during the night for no reason whatsoever. I was left alone, and during the bad season, on the enemy coast; but despite being embarrassed by my prizes and prisoners, I did not want to abandon my project. I made one raid on the coast of Acadia and burned a transport vessel of great value that the enemy had run aground on the beach. I also burned the warehouses and some whaling and codfishing vessels; there was a great quantity of oil consumed, too, with the warehouses.

I then captured, near Isle Royale, three transports and a fourth transport loaded with codfish and furs. I learned from one of these ships that the harbors of Isle Royale were closed by ice, which made the expedition I was planning impractical. These prizes had been escorted by the frigate Flora, then close by but hidden from view by fog. The next day I captured a privateer from Liverpool carrying 16 cannon; I then made sail to bring my prizes to some United States port.

At the latitude of Boston I again encountered the frigate Milford. The Alfred, which by then carried a greatly reduced crew and many prisoners, was very inferior in strength; I would have preferred to avoid an engagement that did not promise any advantage, but my prizes- chiefly the Mellish- obliged me to take that risk, no matter what the chances of success. At nightfall, therefore, I placed myself between my prizes and the enemy and, having given the necessary instructions to the prizes as to how to avoid all danger and to arrive at some safe port, I changed my course during the night, set out a ship's lantern, and in this way drew the enemy into pursuing me. This stratagem saved my prizes. The next day I was fortunate to escape after a serious action with the Milford that was not interrupted or terminated until evening and then by a hard gale. I arrived at Boston on December 16, 1776, having only enough water and provisions for two days; my prizes arrived safely except for one of the smaller ones that the enemy recaptured.

The news of the uniforms captured aboard the Mellish renewed the courage of General Washington's army, which at that time was nearly destitute of clothing. This unexpected relief contributed not insignificantly to the success of the army at the battle of Trenton (against the Hessians) that occurred immediately after my arrival in Boston.

I paid the wages due to the crews of the Alfred and the Providence out of my own purse and lent the remainder of my money to Congress. That honorable assembly, on February 5, sent orders from Philadelphia for me to command and conduct a secret expedition that was important in several respects. Its principal goal was to levy contributions on the island of St. Christopher and on the northern side of Jamaica, then to attack and seize Pensacola. The small squadron designated for this expedition was composed of the Alfred, the Columbus, the Cabot, the Hampden, and the Providence. The project was conceived by me, and I had discussed it with Mr. Morris, who later was minister of finance; but the jealousy of Mr. Hopkins, the commander in

chief, so compromised this enterprise that it did not occur. Wishing then to render an account of these events to Congress in person, I left Boston for Philadelphia by land. Mr. Hopkins was first suspended and soon after was dismissed from the service. The season was so advanced that the expedition was abandoned and Congress resolved to give me command of the frigate Comte D'Argout, while awaiting an occasion to employ me to better advantage. But before I had time to exercise that command, the Secret Committee of Congress ordered me to embark with my officers and sailors on l'Amphitrite, a French ship destined to leave Portsmouth (in New Hampshire) for France, and from there we were to proceed to Holland in order to take command of l'Indienne, an extraordinary frigate carrying 36 pound cannon and constructed in Holland for Congress. However, since the commanding officer of l'Amphitrite did not accept the proposition, Congress instructed me to outfit the Ranger, a frigate of 18 guns, with orders to use this small vessel to go take command of l'Indienne and to keep the Ranger as my escort. This last frigate was not yet fully armed, but when General Burgoyne and his army were forced to surrender at Saratoga, it was I who carried this interesting news to Nantes, where I arrived December 2, 1777.

During my passage I took two prizes from a convoy coming from the Mediterranean under the protection of the Invincible of 74 guns. For an entire day, in fair weather, I sailed very close to this ship and I captured the two prizes under its cannon.

During January 1778, I journeyed from Nantes to Paris to make arrangements with the American ministers for equipping l'Indienne. But because the news of General Burgoyne's capture had by then determined the French court to recognize the independence of America by a treaty of alliance, and because the English ambassador at The Hague had discovered (by obtaining possession of the papers of an American minister) that l'Indienne belonged to Congress, I acquiesced in the wishes of the American ministers, and it was decided that the most prudent way to preserve this frigate until Congress could take effective measures to employ it in the American service was to cede it to His Most Christian Majesty.

This being done, I returned to my little frigate, the Ranger, which was at Nantes. On February 10, 1778, I received from America some information relative to the stations and force of the warships and frigates that were in America under the command of Lord Howe. I wrote the same day to Mr. Deane, one of the American ministers at Paris, giving him a detailed plan for an expedition to be attempted in America, with a squadron of only 10 ships of the line and some frigates and troops, in order to destroy once and for all time the power of the English in the United States before reinforcements could be sent from England.

France then had in its Atlantic ports 30 ships of the line and many frigates equipped and ready for service. Never before had she had, and perhaps never again would she have, a better chance to strike such a decisive blow against the English navy. If this plan had been adopted without delay and if a squadron had been detached immediately from Brest to execute it, Great Britain would have had no knowledge of this devastating project until its effects had been consummated in America. Lord Howe would have been surprised and taken prisoner in the Delaware. Americans could then immediately have manned his fleet and, sending small detachments right and left, they could easily have annihilated the English naval forces on the American coasts before the arrival of Admiral Byron. American enthusiasm would certainly then have so strengthened Washington that he could have taken New York and destroyed or captured all English troops in the United States. At the same time, the

French squadron, entering New York harbor under English colors, could have trapped and captured Lord Byron and successively all the vessels of his fleet, as one after the other the ships-dispersed by storms during the crossing-arrived in port. Thus in one campaign, and with little expense, France would have had an excellent chance to establish American independence and strike a blow that would have brought Great Britain to her knees, forcing her to recognize she was no longer mistress of the ocean. What will posterity think of France's having neglected this inestimable opportunity? Will it not be clear that the original error was only compounded by adopting the plan three months after, when it was too late, and by sending the French fleet from Toulon rather than that from Brest, at the cost of yet another month? It is useless to describe in detail the unfortunate consequences of this delay, but the general result was a long, bloody, expensive war that eventually involved France, Holland, Spain, and the East Indies.

When Mr. Deane informed the court at Versailles of my plan for the expedition to America, he showed such bad faith as to take credit for this project and call himself the author; as a result, he received a portrait of His Majesty on a gold box set with diamonds.

In the meantime, I escorted several American vessels leaving Nantes for Quiberon Bay, where Monsieur de la Motte-Piquet waited with five ships of the line and some frigates under orders to protect and escort them until they were west of Cape Finisterre. The departure of Monsieur de la Motte-Piquet caused no alarm in England, though his destination was unknown.

I reached Quiberon Bay on February 13, 1778. I asked Monsieur de la Motte-Piquet if he would return my salute; that brave officer agreed to do so. Neither he nor I knew that the alliance between France and America had been signed seven days before at Versailles. This was the first salute received by the American Flag from any sovereign power and gave birth to much dispute in the Parliament of England.

I went immediately from Quiberon Bay to Brest; I did not enter the roads, but I dropped anchor at Cameret. There I was detained by contrary winds until the ambassador of France announced at London the final treaty between His Most Christian Majesty and the United States. Then I entered the roads of Brest and saluted the Count d'Orvilliers, who returned the salute and received me with the honors due an admiral on board his flagship, *la Bretagne*. On arriving at Cameret, I communicated to the Count d'Orvilliers my plan for an expedition to America. This commander strongly approved it and immediately sent a copy to Monsieur de Sartine.

In the month of February 1776 the English Parliament had passed a law authorizing George III to treat all Americans captured in arms at sea as "traitors, pirates and felons." This circumstance more than any other made me the declared enemy of Great Britain. Never before had history furnished an example of a people so arrogant as to claim sovereignty of the seas! Never before had it revealed premeditated cruelty such as that which anticipates the crime. From the beginning of the war in America the exchange of prisoners from the ground forces had been arranged between General Washington and the English generals. Despite all her pride Great Britain had been obliged to respect these arrangements and to consider as prisoners of war all the Americans who were captured while in the army; but it was not the same for service at sea. To be taken with arms in hand against England on her pretended empire of the ocean was an unforgivable crime according to the published annals of her Parliament.

If at the time of this act of Parliament the strength of the English navy had been compared with that of the American navy, a relationship of a hundred to one would have been found. Noble sons of liberty, may this be the basis of your glorious renown. May your enemies remember forever how their cruelties were exercised in vain! That far from abating your courage, they forced you, with your tremendous acts of heroism, to sustain the American flag on the oceans that the author of nature created free. Cruelty and fear have always been companions. Only fear has prevented England from giving to the world, for a second time on the occasion of this war, the revolting spectacle of the horrors that ravaged Scotland in 1745. How great would have been the satisfaction of this people, as ferocious as they are vindictive, if they could have hanged until half dead the Americans captured at sea, then cut open their breasts with a knife, and thrown their beating hearts into the flames! If they did not dare attempt this, they did throw a number of American citizens into English prisons where they were kept for five full years, suffered from cold, hunger, and beating, and endured all kinds of outrages. Some of these unfortunate men were sold on the coast of Africa and others were transported to India. The firmness with which these patriot martyrs sustained all these reverses is unexampled. They preferred persecution to saving themselves by serving in the English navy.

Justly indignant at the treatment meted out to these Americans, I resolved to make a great effort to procure their relief and to bring to an end the barbarous ravages perpetrated by the English in America, burning homes, destroying property and even entire towns. I received no orders to secure reparations for these misfortunes and I had not communicated my plan to this end to the American ministers residing in Paris. I proposed to descend on some part of England and there destroy merchant shipping. My plan was also to take someone of particular distinction as a prisoner and to hold him as hostage to guarantee the lives and exchange of Americans then imprisoned in England. Monsieur d'Orvilliers, to whom I communicated this project, offered to procure a captain's commission in the royal navy for me so that in case I ran into superior forces I could claim the protection of France, not yet at war with England; but despite the advantages that this offer held for me, I felt it was necessary to refuse because I had not been authorized by Congress to change my flag and because had I accepted such a commission from France my devotion to the cause of America might have been doubted.

I sailed from Brest and advanced toward the Irish Sea, passing within striking distance of a number of vessels I could have captured, but I did not want to risk dispersing my crew. By the 17th of April everything was prepared for a raid on England, but strong, contrary winds forced me to sail on to the coast of Ireland. Near the entrance into Carrack~fergus I seized a fishing boat carrying six men who turned out to be pilots. The Drake, an English frigate of 20 guns, was then in the roads of Carrack~fergus and within view. I thought it would be possible to seize her at night by surprise. To this end, I made the necessary preparations and forced the pilots to guide the Ranger to the enemy. But the mate, who had drunk too much brandy, did not drop the anchor at the instant the order was given to him, and that prevented the Ranger from running alongside the Drake as I had planned. I believed that since my entrance into the roads had not given an alarm, the most prudent action was to cut my cable and return immediately to the channel. Battered by a storm, I remained there three days and, the weather becoming more favorable, I attempted a second time to descend on England. This plan greatly alarmed the lieutenants on the Ranger. "Their object," they said, "was gain not honor." They were poor: instead of encouraging the morale of the crew,

they excited them to disobedience; they persuaded them that they had the right to judge whether a measure that was proposed to them was good or bad.

I was within sight of Whitehaven, a rather shallow port which contained approximately 400 foreign and domestic merchantmen, averaging 250 tons burden each. My plan was to take advantage of the ebb tide: the ships would then be aground and keeled over. To carry out this project, it was necessary for me to land about midnight with a party of determined volunteers and to seize first the fort and then a battery of heavy cannon that defended the port. My two lieutenants, not demonstrating the high spirit this enterprise required and not wanting to reveal their true motive, declared they were ill with fatigue. I resolved to provide the example and to command the attack in person. Only with much effort and loss of time did I engage 30 volunteers to accompany me. With this handful of men and two small boats, I left the Ranger at 11 o'clock at night and rowed toward Whitehaven, but the distance to shore proved to be greater than I had judged, and with the tide against us dawn broke before we had effected a landing. I sent the smaller boat to the north side of the port to set fire to the merchantmen while I advanced with the other to the south side to take possession of the fort and battery. The fort was taken by assault; we did not use scaling ladders but climbed on the shoulders of the biggest and most robust men and by this means we entered the fort through its embrasures. As I was the commander of this operation, I was also the first to enter the fort. The morning was cold and the sentinels had retired into their guardhouses, not expecting an enemy visit. As I secured their entrance, there was no bloodshed. The fort's 36 gun battery was spiked, and I advanced toward the southern part of the port to burn the ships there, when to my great astonishment I saw that the boat sent to the north had returned and had not accomplished anything. Those who manned it pretended to have been intimidated by certain noises they had heard, but I told them that the noise existed only in their imagination. Believing, however, that it was too late to send them back toward the northern sector, I assembled my small forces and tried to set fires in the south, hoping they would soon spread everywhere. In fact, the fires did spread and rose to a great height. But because it was nearly 8 o'clock in the morning and because thousands of inhabitants began to gather, I could no longer postpone my retreat. I made it in very good order. When all of my force was embarked I remained for several minutes on the far breakwater to contemplate at length the terror, panic, and stupidity of the inhabitants, who numbered no less than 10,000 and stood as still as statues or scurried senselessly here and there to gain some high ground beyond the city. The oarsmen had already rowed some distance from shore before the English risked approaching their fort, and when they found their cannon spiked they brought some pieces from vessels and fired toward our dinghies. I responded to their salute by firing mortars that I had placed in the stern of my boat.

Once back on board the Ranger, and the wind being favorable, I made sail for the coast of Scotland. My intention was to seize Count Selkirk and detain him as a hostage in conformity with the plan of which I have already spoken. For this purpose, I landed on the lord's estate about noon of the same day with only two officers and a small guard in one boat. Upon landing I met some inhabitants who, taking me for an Englishman, told me that Lord Selkirk was in London, but that his wife and several ladies of her acquaintance were in the castle. This made me resolve to go at once to the boat in order to return to the Ranger. This moderate conduct did not suit my men, who were disposed to pillage, burn, and plunder all they could. Even though that would have been to wage war in the manner of the English, I did not believe in imitating them, particularly on this occasion when I considered the respects due to a

lady. It was necessary, however, to find a way to satisfy the cupidity of my crew and at the same time spare Lady Selkirk. I had only an instant to think of a way: what seemed to me the most proper for all concerned was to order the two officers to repair to the castle with the guard, which was to remain outside under arms while the officers entered alone. They could then politely demand the family plate, stopping for only a few minutes and accepting what was given them without further inquiry, returning without further search. I was punctually obeyed and the plate was delivered. Lady Selkirk herself commented several times to the officers that she was very touched by the moderation I had shown. She even wanted to come to the shore-more than a mile distant from her castle-to invite me to dine with her, but the officers requested her not to quit her home.

The next day, April 24, 1778, I was back in the roads of Carrack~fergus where, as I have already said, the Drake, an English frigate of 20 guns, was at anchor. My intention was to enter the roads and attack this frigate in broad daylight, but in the eyes of the lieutenants the project was by no means right because it involved honor more than self-interest, their only motive. The crew of the Ranger took this occasion to mutiny so that I ran the risk of being killed or thrown overboard. Two days earlier I had nearly been abandoned on the shore at Whitehaven. In the meantime the captain of the Drake, having been informed of our landing at Whitehaven, prepared to sail. His boat was sent out with an officer and a telescope to reconnoiter the Ranger. I took advantage of this occasion to disguise my ship. I masked my guns and had my crew remain out of sight. The Ranger having the air of a merchantman, the boat from the Drake was deceived, drew alongside, and was captured. This trifling success had such an exhilarating effect on my crew that they no longer objected to giving battle. The Drake, having fired several cannon in a vain attempt to recall her boat, hoisted anchor to come out and engage the Ranger. The Drake, filled with volunteers, had two more cannon than the Ranger and nearly double the manpower. It was accompanied by a number of small yachts that had gentlemen and ladies on board as if for a pleasant outing. The Ranger awaited the approach of the Drake and allowed it to cross half the channel, which separated Scotland and Ireland, before commencing the battle. When the affair became serious and it was evident that the Ranger would not withdraw, the yachts immediately retired to a respectful distance and then decided it would be prudent to retreat.

I did not start engaging the enemy until they were within pistol range. At this distance a lively action was sustained for an hour and five minutes, after which the English frigate lowered her flag. Her captain had just been wounded in the head by a musket ball, from which he died. The lieutenant, also mortally wounded, survived only two days. I regretted that these brave men had to perish and I buried them at sea with the honors they deserved. The six honest fishermen, whom I mentioned before, had lost their boat sunk in the sea during the bad weather that preceded the descent on Whitehaven. I was fortunate enough to find in my own purse sufficient English gold to replace their loss and recompense their services. The Drake was heavily damaged in her masts and rigging; she lost 42 men either killed or wounded during the action. I had taken several other prizes, but because I had left France with only 123 men I could man only two of these prizes, which arrived safely at Brest; the others were burned or sunk.

With the Ranger, the Drake, and one other prize I ran westward of Ireland and arrived at Brest on May 7, having been absent only 28 days and having taken more than 200 prisoners.

This expedition caused great harm to Great Britain and she found it necessary not only to fortify her ports but also to arm the Volunteers of Ireland. This was later substantiated by Lord Mountmorris in a public speech.

When circumstances had obliged me to permit my men to demand Lady Selkirk's family plate, I had resolved to redeem it with my own funds whenever it should be sold and return it to the lady. Consequently, when we arrived in Brest my first task was to write her a moving letter, in which I described the motives for my expedition and the cruel necessity I was under to inflict punishment in retaliation for English conduct in America. This letter was sent by packet to the postmaster general in London, so that it could be shown to the English king and his ministers, and so the court at London would be forced to renounce the bloody act of Parliament and exchange those American "traitors, pirates, and felons" for the prisoners of war I had captured and sent to France.

The Count d'Orvilliers sent a detailed account of my expedition to the minister of marine, who wrote to Dr. Franklin that His Majesty wanted me to come to Versailles: "That the king wanted to employ me as commander of secret expeditions and that to this end he would give me l'Indienne and other frigates with troops in order to undertake landings, etc." As a result Dr. Franklin wrote to me informing me of the project and instructing me to keep it a secret between us, as the government had not seen fit to inform even the other American ministers in Paris of it.

Monsieur de Sartine received me with much distinction and made me the most flattering promises. The Prince of Nassau was sent to Holland to make the necessary arrangements to equip and arm l'Indienne. But before anything relative to the project for which I had been called could be effected, war began between France and England with the engagement of la Belle-Poule. This embarrassed the minister of marine and the difficulty was not lessened by the news which the Prince of Nassau reported upon his return from Holland-that the Dutch were opposed to the outfitting of l'Indienne. I offered to return to the Ranger, but in order to persuade me to stay M. de Sartine had written an officious letter to the three American ministers and obtained their formal consent for me to remain in Europe and execute any assignment I might receive. As the main fleet had been ordered at that moment to put to sea from Brest, and because no measures to employ me were forthcoming, I offered to embark with the comte d'Orvilliers. The minister answered that the king appreciated this offer, but he could not consent because it was his intention to provide more useful employment for me during this interval.

Thereupon I was requested to send my ideas for employing a small, light squadron destined for secret missions to the minister. I seized the opportunity and proposed several plans on that subject: among others, to destroy the power of England in Africa and in Hudson Bay; to destroy the Newfoundland fisheries; to intercept the English fleets from the East and West Indies; and, what was then more important, to intercept the Baltic fleet, which was escorted by only one frigate. I had received personal information from England concerning this last project, and I offered to undertake it with only three frigates and three cutters. The minister adopted this plan, and I came to Brest to take command of one of the frigates which were then stationed in that port and to take under my overall command two other frigates with the cutters that were at St. Malo. When I arrived at Brest, the Count d'Orvilliers had given the command of the frigate in question to a French officer. Because there was not a moment to lose,

the senior officer of the frigates stationed at St. Malo was dispatched against the Baltic fleet, but since he did not approach close enough to the English coast, he was unable to accomplish his mission and returned to Brest.

At the same time the minister sent orders to the Count d'Orvilliers to receive me on board *la Bretagne*, but the count had already left Brest for the second time before receiving this dispatch. Monsieur de la Prevally, who commanded at Brest and had a rather bad disposition, did not permit me to embark on the frigate that carried dispatches to the main fleet.

So I remained at Brest in this most disagreeable situation, not being at liberty to say on what grounds I had left the *Ranger*. I was the object of much jealousy and false speculation among the naval officers.

From the beginning of my relationship with the Count d'Orvilliers I was treated with special distinction and I received several important lessons on naval tactics and on the details of conducting fleets and their operations.

After many plans had miscarried and much time had been lost because of the indecision of the minister of marine, he invited me at the beginning of December 1778 to go from Brest to Lorient to examine some *Compagnie des Indes* vessels that were then for sale. I found that some of them could be converted to warships, above all *le Marechal de Broglio*, a new ship capable of mounting 64 guns. The minister, however, did not take any decisive action, but allowed two more months to pass without deciding anything.

Because I had already lost nine months since agreeing to remain in Europe under the orders of the court and as I did not see an end to my disagreeable situation, I went by stage to Versailles, determined to return to America if the minister did not immediately give me a command. When I left Lorient I recalled the words of Poor Richard: "If you want your affairs to prosper, go yourself; if not, send someone." This led me to say to myself that if the minister gave me satisfaction, I would call the ship that I personally commanded the *Bonhomme Richard*.

The minister of marine received me very well and apologized to me for the past. He urged me to accept command of *le Marechal de Broglio*, to which he proposed to add three or four frigates and two fireships, and he promised to embark 500 men from the *Regiment de Walsh Irlandais* as landing troops. But despairing of finding in Europe a sufficient number of American sailors to man *le Marechal de Broglio*, I was obliged to refuse the command of that beautiful vessel; and because the minister again promised me *l'Indienne*, I temporarily accepted *le Duras*, which I called the *Bonhomme Richard*, a small vessel that, having made four voyages to India, was very old and in bad condition.

Monsieur Garnier, who had been *Charge d'Affaires* in England, a man of great insight and sound judgment, helped me make all the arrangements with the minister concerning the small squadron I was destined to command. I had adopted, in agreement with him, several plans related to different important operations I wanted to undertake, having *carte blanche*. It was the most irritating of misfortunes that I was deprived of the aid of a man of such ability almost immediately after that. Monsieur Garnier was destined to succeed Monsieur Gerard as the king's minister in America; a very different man was his successor. In my opinion this commissioner was lacking in

judgment, uncertain, and indiscreet. He was consistent only in the things that affected his interests, so that the minister made an error in judgment when he confided public affairs to such a man.

As the proper cannon could not be found at Lorient to arm the Bonhomme Richard, I went to Bordeaux and from there to Angouleme, where I contracted for the cannon which were needed. On my return to Lorient, I enlisted 30 American sailors who had just arrived from England, where they had been exchanged. At Nantes I found an express letter from the court. The Marquis de Lafayette had come from America to France and wanted to join me for an expedition, and he had obtained from the king the command of troops for this purpose. As a result, I was ordered to return immediately to the court to make the necessary arrangements. The commissioner was ignorant of the terms that had been agreed to between Monsieur Garnier and myself, wherein, as I previously noted, I had carte blanche and was the sole commander. The affair then took on a new aspect. I was not reluctant to share my authority with the Marquis de Lafayette; I was certain that the two of us could act in concert and with mutual confidence. But I was very astonished to learn that the commissioner also knew the secret of a special, and very difficult, mission.

During this interval the armament was pursued without interruption. The commissioner purchased at Nantes a former merchantman called la Pallas of 32 eight-pounders and a small brig called la Vengeance of 12 three-pounders. Neither of these two ships had been built for war. They proceeded to Lorient to join the Bonhomme Richard, as did le Cerf, a very handsome cutter from the royal navy of 18 nine-pound cannon, and the Alliance, a completely new frigate, belonging to the United States, mounting 36 guns. Because the cannon had not yet arrived from Angouleme, the Bonhomme Richard was armed with an old battery of 12-pounders, and as the aim of the project was the enemy's main ports, I mounted six old 18-pound cannon over the powder magazine, so that the Bonhomme Richard, which strictly speaking was a frigate of 34 guns, now carried 40. As it was impossible to procure a sufficient number of American sailors, it was decided to remedy this deficiency by enrolling sailors who were prisoners of war in France, and marine companies were hurriedly formed by drafting a certain number of peasants. So it is easy to understand that the Bonhomme Richard had one of the worst crews ever found on a vessel. But I had been told that a body of elite troops under the Marquis de Lafayette would guarantee the good conduct of the crew. However, when the small squadron was ready for service and the troops were ready to embark, I received a letter from the Marquis de Lafayette in which he informed me that the purpose of the expedition having been divulged in Paris, the king had ordered that the troops not embark. The Marquis de Lafayette was ordered to join his regiment.

Thus the project, which was no less than raiding Liverpool, the second largest city of England, failed because it had been indiscreetly communicated to _____.

It has been noted that the first plan to arm my little squadron called for two fireships and 500 men from the Regiment de Walsh Irlandais as landing troops. But the minister did not keep his word; he neither procured the fireships nor the 500 troops, so it was impossible for me to carry out the plan I had developed with Monsieur Garnier, which in my opinion was even more important than raiding Liverpool. The commissioner was not only indiscreet but at Lorient he assumed the role of minister, and by interfering consistently in the discipline of the squadron he led the captains

and officers to turn to him on all occasions as a subject of France representing the king's person and to consider me with a suspicious eye as a foreigner.

In my opinion, it was hardly possible for the commissioner to render a greater disservice to his country, because the king had generously resolved to sustain, at his expense and under the American flag, the squadron he had entrusted to me; and as I had given all the commissions to the American officers, it was important for the good of the service that they believe they were in the pay and service of Congress and that the squadron belonged to the United States. If the officers had been of this belief, one could have expected very outstanding services despite the disadvantages of poor crews, bad cannon, and vessels that were not designed for war. But because doubt and jealousy were cast into their minds, all subordination was destroyed.

I received orders to escort from Lorient a fleet of transports and merchantmen bound for different ports between that city and Bordeaux, and after that I was to take, or to chase the English from, the Bay of Biscay and then return to Lorient for further orders.

While fulfilling this mission, as the squadron and the convoy were laying to at night with topsails aback at the latitude of Rochefort, the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Alliance* ran afoul of each other and suffered minor damage. As this accident occurred through the negligence of the officers on watch, they were cashiered and discharged from the service.

I gave chase to several vessels, but I was unable to overtake them. One morning I saw three frigates, a light squadron from Rochefort under the command of the Chevalier de la Touche, which were to the windward. Since *le Cerf* had given chase to a ship the preceding day until it was lost from view, I had only the *Bonhomme Richard*, the *Alliance*, and *la Pallas* with *la Vengeance*, a small corvette of so little consequence she was hardly worth counting. I believed that the squadron I had in view was English and I made every effort to reach it, but without success.

A few days later, finding myself in view of the Isle de Groix, I permitted the vessels that were under my orders to go to Lorient as quickly as possible. The weather was foggy and in the afternoon I found myself alone on the *Bonhomme Richard* and very near two frigates which began pursuing me. As soon as I was ready to do battle, and seeing that they were faster than the *Bonhomme Richard*, I put about to go into combat. But when they saw this they also put about. I crowded sail on and followed them until after midnight; they were then beyond Belle-Isle, and because of their superior speed they were nearly out of sight.

The Chevalier de la Touche, who commanded them from the frigate *l'Herrnion*, dropped anchor three or four days later at Isle de Groix and sent his boat to Lorient to pay his compliments. He had taken me for English both times he had encountered me.

While the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Alliance* were being repaired at Lorient, I sent *la Pallas*, *le Cerf*, and *la Vengeance* to patrol in the Bay of Biscay to protect the coast and to take or chase any enemy ships that were cruising there.

The commissioner had again come to Lorient from the court under the pretext of better equipping the *Bonhomme Richard*, but his real aim was to form a new conspiracy that would force me to sign an agreement with the captains to send all of

the squadron's prizes into port under his consignment. This grasping man had the skill to persuade the captains that if they did this they would restrain me and that their interests would be more secure in his hands.

The commissioner persuaded Mr. Franklin that the king's intention was that the prizes be sent into port to be at his (the commissioner's) disposition and the American minister gave me orders to that effect.

By this order, contrary to the laws governing the use of the American flag, Mr. Franklin exceeded the limits of authority that Congress had confided in him.

When the squadron was ready to put to sea and the captains had signed the Concordat, the commissioner pretended to have received extraordinary authority from the minister of marine, whereby he could, if he determined that it was appropriate, remove the commander of the squadron. As a result I felt it was prudent to sign the Concordat and I signed it on the eve of my departure. At any other time and in any other circumstances, I would have rejected this condition with disdain. I saw the danger I ran, but having announced in America that I was remaining in Europe, because the French court had requested this, to command some secret expedition, I resolved to expose myself to all dangers.

Although other American prisoners had arrived at Nantes after having been exchanged in England, I could only make a very small change in the crew of the *Bonhomme Richard*. They were generally so mean that the only expedient I could find that allowed me to command was to divide them into two parties and let one group of rogues guard the other

I received orders to sail west of Ireland and north of Scotland to intercept the enemy shipping around the Orcades, the Cape of Derneus, and Dogger Bank and to return to the Texel by October 1 to receive further orders. But as I had informed Dr. Franklin, through whom I had always received the orders of the court, this so limited my operations that I would not be able to take advantage of circumstances which might permit me to render more Important services, such as intercepting commerce of much greater importance, making a landing and alarming the enemy in the north, and making a considerable diversion on behalf of the Count d'Orvilliers, who was in the channel with 66 ships of the line with which he was expected to destroy Plymouth or Portsmouth and perhaps both of them. Mr. Franklin, as a result, gave me *carte blanche* for six weeks for these operations, and the only restriction he maintained was that I was to enter the Texel by the first of October.

In addition to various ideas I had, I was informed from England that eight vessels were expected from India and that they should first appear off the west coast of Ireland near Limerick. This merited attention. As there were two privateers at Lorient ready for sea, *le Monsieur* of 40 guns and *le Granville* of 14, whose officers had already offered to place themselves under my command, I agreed to their proposition. But the commissioner would not hear of accepting any engagement from them regarding their conduct.

This arrogant action caused the spread of the belief among the Americans, and particularly on board the *Alliance*, that the squadron belonged neither to the king of France nor to Congress, but to the owners of privateers with whom the commissioner and Dr. Franklin were associated.

With all these mishaps, it is easy to see that I was thwarted in all my projects and that my situation was perhaps the most precarious and the most disagreeable in which a commander had ever found himself.

The squadron set sail from the Groix roadstead on August 14, 1779. As soon as I had passed to the north of the entrance of the channel, the two corsairs le Monsieur and le Granville abandoned me during the night, and le Cerf was separated immediately after. I had wanted to wait for the ships from India for 15 days at the latitude of Limerick; but the captain of the Alliance, who pretended to believe the rest of the squadron were privateers, made a great deal of difficulty and then left me during the night.

Because I then had only la Pallas and la Vengeance with me, I was obliged to renounce my plans concerning the eight ships from India. From the beginning I had not counted on the two privateers; but I naturally expected the Alliance and le Cerf to rendezvous north of Scotland. The Alliance rejoined me, but le Cerf returned to France.

I had taken two prizes near Ireland, which I sent to France. Within sight of Scotland I captured two privateers, valuable ships of 32 guns each, and a brigantine, which I sent to Bergen in Norway in accordance with the order I had received from Dr. Franklin. These three prizes were restored to England by the king of Denmark. The Alliance left me again when I entered the North Sea. I captured several prizes near the Gulf of Edinburgh, and I learned from speaking to the prisoners and from the newspapers that were on board the prizes that the capital of Scotland and the port of Leith were undefended. The newspapers also confirmed the word I had received from England concerning the eight ships from India; they had entered the port of Limerick three days after I had been obliged to leave the harbor's entrance.

Because of the situation at Edinburgh and at Leith (which had only a coastguard vessel of 20 guns and two cutters to defend the roads), I believed it would be possible to put Leith and Edinburgh under ransom. I had only the Bonhomme Richard, la Pallas, and la Vengeance with which to execute this great project. But I knew that to strike a brilliant blow it was not always necessary to have a great force. I convinced the captains of la Pallas and the small corvette, by holding out the prospect of large profits to them. I was sure that in case of failure I could still, at least, make a very advantageous diversion in behalf of the enterprise of the Count d'Orvilliers in the channel. I distributed red uniforms to my marines, and I placed a few men dressed in them on the two prizes so that the two ships looked like transports.

The necessary arrangements were taken to carry out the enterprise, but a quarter of an hour before the attack was to have been made a sudden storm rose and obliged me to run before the wind out of the Gulf of Edinburgh. The storm was so violent it sent one of my prizes to the bottom.

I had in mind other enterprises which, despite the mediocrity of my force, could be executed on the west coast of Great Britain. But I could not persuade the captains of la Pallas and la Vengeance to support me. I was therefore obliged to limit myself to spreading alarm and destroying shipping, and I fulfilled this dual aim all along the coast to Hull. In this manner I made a very considerable diversion, and I drew English

forces toward me, thus greatly favoring the enterprise of the combined fleet at Plymouth and Portsmouth.

On the morning of September 23, while I was cruising at the latitude of the Cape of Flamborough, which I had assigned for my third rendezvous, and where I expected to be rejoined by the Alliance and le Cerf and to meet the Baltic fleet which was expected at any hour, the Alliance appeared but she did not speak to the Bonhomme Richard.

I had put men on several prizes, and I had lost two boats with their crews who had fled to the coast of Ireland. At that moment I had sent the second lieutenant, Henry Lunt, with another officer and 18 men in a pilot boat to chase a ship then in view to the windward. As a result my crew was very diminished and on the Bonhomme Richard I had only one lieutenant, Richard Dale, and some junior officers.

I was in these circumstances when the Baltic fleet appeared toward 2 P.M. I was windward of the enemy and two leagues from the coast of England.

Information from prisoners had confirmed that the fleet was escorted by the Serapis, a new vessel that could mount 56 guns but then mounted only 44 in two batteries, one composed of 18-pounders, and by the Countess of Scarborough, a new frigate mounting 22 guns.

When the enemy saw that we had taken the chase, the Serapis and the Countess of Scarborough took advantage of the wind to stand out to sea while the convoy crowded on sail toward the fortress of Scarborough.

As there was little wind, I was unable to close with the enemy before night. The moon did not rise until 8 o'clock, and as soon as it was dark the Serapis and the Countess of Scarborough came about and put on all sail for the fort of Scarborough.

I was fortunate enough to discover this enemy movement with my night glass, otherwise they would have escaped me. As this forced me to alter my course by six points of the compass with the intention of cutting off the enemy from their retreat toward shore, the captain of la Pallas concluded that the crew of the Bonhomme Richard had revolted, and this idea convinced him to haul his wind and to stand away from the shore. At the same time, the Alliance lay windward of the enemy at a considerable distance. Because the captain of this vessel had not paid attention to the signals of the Bonhomme Richard since leaving France, I was obliged to run all the risks and engage the enemy with the Bonhomme Richard alone to prevent their escape.

I began the battle at 7 o'clock at night and within pistol range of the Serapis, and I sustained it for nearly an hour at that distance, exposed at the same time to the attack of the Countess of Scarborough, which raked the stern of the Bonhomme Richard with broadsides.

It has been noted that properly speaking the Bonhomme Richard was only a frigate of 34 guns, the battery of which was of 12-pounders but that it had been decided to mount six 18-pounders above the powder magazine, which would have been very useful in cannonading a port. The sea was very calm during the battle with the Serapis and I hoped to derive a great advantage from these six 18-pound guns. But instead of

that, the old cannons burst at the beginning of the action and the officers and men above the powder magazine, who had been selected as the best of the crew, were killed, wounded, or so frightened that none of them was of any use during the remainder of the engagement.

In this unfortunate extremity, having to contend with forces three times superior to my own, the Bonhomme Richard was in great danger of going to the bottom. With her battery out of action I had recourse to the dangerous expedient of throwing grappling irons on the Serapis in order to nullify the superior power of her two batteries and to shield myself from the fire of the Countess of Scarborough. This maneuver succeeded perfectly, and with my own hands I tied the Serapis to the Bonhomme Richard. The captain, Thomas Piercy, of the Countess of Scarborough, an illegitimate son of the Duke of Northumberland, conducted himself like a man of sense and from that time on ceased fire on the Bonhomme Richard, knowing full well that he could not damage us without equally damaging the Serapis.

The Serapis being then to windward, dropped her anchor as soon as she was hooked, hoping by this to disengage herself from the Bonhomme Richard, but success did not answer her expectations. From then on the combat was limited to the firing of cannon, swivel guns, muskets, and grenades. The enemy at first showed a desire to board the Bonhomme Richard; however, after having thought it over, they did not dare try. But the Serapis had the advantage of her two batteries, besides the cannon on the quarterdeck and on the forecastle, whereas the Bonhomme Richard's cannon were either broken or abandoned, except for four pieces on the quarterdeck, which were also abandoned for some minutes. The officer, Matthew Mease, who commanded these four cannons on the quarterdeck was dangerously wounded in the head, and having at that moment no object more deserving of my attention, I took command of them myself. Some sailors came to aid me of their own accord and serviced the two cannon alongside of the enemy with surprising skill and courage. A few minutes later I found enough men to transport one of the cannon on the quarterdeck to the opposite side, but I was not able to find sufficient force to bring the other, so I could bring to bear only three guns against the enemy for the rest of the action.

The moon rose at 8 o'clock in the evening and the two vessels were then in flames from the cannonade. That was why the Serapis' mainmast, which was painted yellow, was such an easy object to distinguish, and I pointed one of my guns loaded with bar shot at it. In the meantime the two other pieces were well used to destroy the barricades of the enemy and to sweep their quarterdeck with oblique fire. Only the men on the topmast bravely supported the quarterdeck cannons with muskets and swivel guns and threw grenades on board the enemy vessel with great skill.

In this way the enemy were killed, wounded, or driven from their stations on deck and aloft, notwithstanding the superiority of their artillery and manpower.

Captain Richard Pearson of the Serapis consulted with his officers and they resolved to surrender, but an unfortunate circumstance happened on board the Bonhomme Richard to prevent them. A bullet having cut one of our pumps, the master carpenter, John Gunnison, was seized with panic and cried to the chief gunner, Henry Gardner, and the master at arms John Burbank, that the Bonhomme Richard was sinking. This idea so terrified these men that they forgot their duties and thought only of saving their lives. At the same moment, someone told the chief gunner that the lieutenant and I had been killed. As a result, thinking that he had become the commanding officer,

the chief gunner rushed to the bridge to haul down the American flag, which he would have done if the flagstaff had not been carried away when the Bonhomme Richard hooked the Serapis.

The captain of the Serapis, hearing the chief gunner of the Bonhomme Richard ask for quarter because he thought the Bonhomme Richard was sinking, hastened to cry to me: "Do you ask for quarter? Do you ask for quarter?"

I had been so occupied in firing the three cannon on the quarterdeck, I did not know what had passed between the chief gunner, the master carpenter, and the master at arms, so that I replied to the English captain: "Je ne songe point a me rendre, mais je suis determine a vous faire demander quartier."*

*(Jones' words from the original manuscript in the Library of Congress: "That point didn't occur to me, but I am determined to make you ask for quarter." The 1812 translation that this document comes from translated it as: "I do not dream of surrendering, but I am determined to make you strike." It wasn't until 1825 that a biographer loosely translated it as: "I have not yet begun to fight.")

The captain of the Serapis, however, conceived some hope, because of what the American chief gunner had said, that the Bonhomme Richard was about to sink. But when he found that his men on the upper decks were in imminent danger, he sent them to the main deck to service the two batteries, which they fired against the side of the Bonhomme Richard with the fury of vengeance and despair.

It has been observed that, when I began the action, la Pallas was a great distance to the windward and the Alliance also lay to the windward. When the captain of la Pallas heard action begin, he approached and spoke to the Alliance, but they lost much time and it was not until after all that has been related that the two frigates came within cannon range of the Countess of Scarborough. Because la Pallas engaged this frigate while sailing before the wind and tide (at the same time that the Serapis was at anchor and under the grappling irons of the Bonhomme Richard, which had the wind astern), soon they were both a considerable distance to leeward. The Alliance followed la Pallas and the Countess of Scarborough and while passing along the exterior side of the Bonhomme Richard delivered a broadside within gunshot range against the bow of this frigate and the stern of the Serapis, which together formed one small target. But it is easy to suppose that the broadside of the Alliance did more damage to the Bonhomme Richard than to the Serapis because the men of the Serapis had been chased from the upper decks to the covered deck; whereas on board the Bonhomme Richard not only a number of people who were then on the upper decks (after they had been chased by the two enemy batteries from the places where they were hidden) but also the men who were serving the pumps and the three guns on the quarterdeck were much more exposed.

The battle between the Bonhomme Richard and the Serapis continued with the greatest intensity. The bulwarks of the Serapis were damaged or burned, and the mainmast was gradually cut down by the grapeshot of the Bonhomme Richard, while the much superior artillery of the Serapis' two batteries struck one side of the Bonhomme Richard and blew out the other so that during the last hour of combat the shot passed through both sides of the Bonhomme Richard meeting little or no resistance. The rudder was shattered and only an old timber here and there kept the poop from crashing down on the gundeck.

After a retreating action of short duration the Countess of Scarborough surrendered to la Pallas. They were then a considerable distance to the leeward of the Bonhomme Richard and the Serapis. The Alliance, which had followed them downwind, lost much time in going this way and that and questioning the prize and la Pallas, but finally the captain of la Pallas asked the captain of the Alliance: "Do you want to take charge of the prize, or go to aid the commodore?" and the Alliance began to maneuver to gain the wind. She tacked several times before regaining the wind and finally she sent a second broadside against the bow of the Serapis and the stern of the Bonhomme Richard. Some other people and I shouted to the Alliance to cease firing for God's sake and to send some men on board the Bonhomme Richard. The captain of the Alliance disobeyed; passing alongside the Bonhomme Richard and bringing a few cannon to bear during the passage, she unleashed a third broadside against the bow of the Bonhomme Richard and the stern of the Serapis. After this the Alliance kept at a respectful distance and took great care not to expose herself either to receive a blow or to have a single man killed or wounded.

The idea that the Bonhomme Richard was going to sink had so deranged the master at arms mind by excessive fear that he opened the hatches and, despite my repeated orders to the contrary, let out all of the prisoners we had, numbering 100. At the time of outfitting, the commissioner had refused to provide iron chains for the prisoners, and this mental derangement of the master at arms might have become fatal, if I had not taken advantage of the prisoners' fear and put them to work at the pumps where they displayed surprising zeal, appearing to have forgotten that they were prisoners and that nothing could prevent their leaving the Bonhomme Richard to board the Serapis, as it was entirely in their power to put an end to the fight by killing me or throwing me overboard.

As the three guns of the Bonhomme Richard continued to fire without interruption against the Serapis and finally cut down the railing on her quarterdeck and her mainmast, so that the latter was only supported by the yards of the Bonhomme Richard, and at the same time the men in the rigging maintained a continuous fire of muskets, swivel guns, and grenades, the enemy began to slacken their fire and soon lost all hope. One circumstance that contributed a great deal to the victory of the Bonhomme Richard was the extraordinary presence of mind and intrepidity of a Scottish sailor, William Hamilton, who was posted in the mainmast. This brave man, on his own accord, seized a lighted match and a basket of grenades and advanced along the main yard of the Bonhomme Richard until he was directly over the enemy's upper deck, and as the flames from their railings and shrouds added to the light of the moon he could see all that happened on the enemy vessel. Every time he saw two or three men gathered together he would throw a grenade among them. He was even skillful enough to throw several into their hatchways, and one of them set fire to the charge of an 18-pounder on the first gundeck, burning a number of people.

At this point the captain of the Serapis advanced on the upper deck, lowered his flag, and asked for quarter. At the very instant that he was lowering his flag, his mainmast fell into the sea. He came with his officers from the Serapis onto the Bonhomme Richard and presented me with his sword. While this was happening 8 or 10 men of the Bonhomme Richard made off with the Serapis' shallop, which had been in tow during the fight.

It was after 11 o'clock when the battle ended; consequently, it had lasted more than four hours. The Bonhomme Richard had on board only 322 men, good or bad, when the battle began; and the 60 men who were stationed in the powder magazine when the cannon burst, having been of no service during the action, cannot properly be counted as part of the force that opposed the Serapis. While in Denmark the Serapis had received a number of English sailors who had come from India to that country, so that according to the roll, which was found after the battle, there were more than 400 men on board when she first encountered the Bonhomme Richard.

Her superiority in cannon was even greater, not to mention the intrinsic value of her artillery, which so completely surpassed that of the Bonhomme Richard that it would be very difficult to compare them.

Thus, putting aside the damage done to the Bonhomme Richard by the Countess of Scarborough during the first hour of combat and by the three broadsides of the Alliance thereafter, it is not difficult to form a judgment on the combat between the Bonhomme Richard and the Serapis and on a victory obtained over so superior a force after such a long, bloody, and close range battle.

La Vengeance, a corvette mounting 12 three-pounders, and the pilot's boat with the second lieutenant, Henry Lunt, of the Bonhomme Richard, another officer, and 18 men, could have been of singular service either in pursuing and capturing the convoy, or in reinforcing me by supplementing the men on board the Bonhomme Richard. But, strange to say, they remained all the time as spectators without interest in the affair, staying out of danger and to windward, and the least that one can say about the conduct of the Alliance is that it appeared to stem from a principle worse than ignorance or insubordination.

It is clear from what has been said that if the Baltic fleet escaped, it is due particularly to the disorder that the commissioner created in the squadron through his avaricious cabals. And one can attribute the impossibility of waiting for the eight vessels from India and the fact that no enemy ports were destroyed or ransomed to this same cause.

It is fair to say, however, that some of the officers who were on board the Bonhomme Richard conducted themselves in a very admirable manner during the action. The lieutenant, Richard Dale, having been abandoned at the battery and finding that he could not rally his men, came up on deck, and, although wounded, supervised the working of the pumps. But despite all his efforts, the hold of the Bonhomme Richard was more than half filled with water when the enemy surrendered.

During the last three hours of the battle, the two vessels were on fire. Quantities of water were thrown on it and the fire at times appeared to be extinguished, but it always broke out anew. After the action, it was thought to be entirely extinguished. The weather was calm during the remainder of the night, but when the wind rose a little the fire broke out again, much more dangerous for having penetrated the timbers of the Bonhomme Richard to within a few inches of the powder magazines. The powder was immediately carried on deck, ready to be thrown into the sea as a last resort. Finally the fire was completely extinguished by our cutting away planks and drowning it with great amounts of water.

The next morning the weather was cloudy and foggy, and when it cleared around 11 o'clock all of the enemy convoy had taken refuge under the fortress of Scarborough and not a single sail was to be seen along the coast.

We then examined the *Bonhomme Richard* to determine if it were possible for her to be conducted into some port. The examination ended at 6 o'clock in the evening, and we judged the thing impracticable, mostly because of blows she had received in the bow from the *Alliance*, causing holes that could not be closed. Consequently, I employed all the boats without delay to save the wounded by carrying them to other vessels. This work took all night, and the next morning, despite our having continuously and vigorously employed the pumps, the water had entirely filled the hold. Then, as the wind rose, the *Bonhomme Richard* immediately sank.

I saved only my signal flags. I lost all of my belongings, amounting to more than 50,000 livres, not counting a number of invaluable papers. The officers and men of the ship also lost all of their personal effects.

I took command of the *Serapis*, on which we had jury rigged masts, but I was tossed about in the North Sea by contrary winds for 10 days before reaching the Texel. I would have liked first to debark my 600 prisoners at Dunkirk, and the wind was favorable for this enterprise the day I entered the Texel. But the commissioner's cabal opposed this necessary plan. Because that imprudent man had told the captains not only that the squadron was destined for the Texel, but also what its object was to be in Holland, they left me, and I was obliged to follow them into the Texel since they had most of the prisoners.

Upon my entry into the Texel, I found the agent of Congress, Monsieur Dumas, from whom I received the orders of the minister of marine in a letter from Dr. Franklin. I found by these letters that I had received a very important assignment: it was nothing less than to escort from there to Brest some 100 Dutch vessels loaded with war materiel and building timbers belonging to His Majesty.

It also seemed to be the intention of the minister that I take the officers and men of the *Bonhomme Richard* to man the new frigate *l'Indienne*, which carried a battery of 36-pounders and which, as I have already observed, had been built in Amsterdam for the United States.

Although this matter concerning *l'Indienne* was the only one that had been communicated to me before leaving France, the entire project had been revealed to the commissioner, and I think that, as was his wont, to ease the burden of this confidence he had passed it along to all the captains and possibly even to a great number of his personal friends. Because the captains talked about it in Holland without any reserve, immediately after my arrival I thought it was my duty to inform the minister that I foresaw the impossibility of executing this plan. It is obvious that if the commissioner had not intervened with his cabal in this project, I would have entered the Texel with my entire squadron little damaged.

The events that followed proved my conjecture was right. The grand allied fleet of 66 vessels of the line having retired from the channel without attempting a single military operation, Great Britain was reassured as to her fear of invasion and turned a great part of her attention to the vengeance she desired to exercise on me. For this purpose she employed 42 sail, some two-decked vessels but most simply frigates. This force

was divided into light squadrons, one of which was stationed in the Downs to keep watch on the strait between Dover and Calais. The English cruised the length of the eastern coast of England and Scotland, advanced to the coast of Norway, patrolled the sea of Ireland and the west coast of that island, and, as soon as my presence in Holland was known in England, two squadrons were sent to watch the entrance of the Texel and the Fly. They never left these posts during the remainder of the three months that I was in Holland.

My situation in the Texel greatly influenced the policies of all the belligerent powers and captivated the attention of all of Europe.

England's ambassador to The Hague, Sir Joseph Yorke, addressed different memorials to the Estates General, insisting on the return of the *Serapis* and the Countess of Scarborough to his king and claiming me as "the Scottish pirate," but these memorials did not have the effect he desired, and the efforts he made to induce some magistrates or citizens of Amsterdam to betray or kidnap me were equally without success.

It was necessary to repair the squadron and to procure a mainmast for the *Serapis* and provisions from Amsterdam for about 600 prisoners. Because it was very difficult to treat the wounded on board the ships, the Estates General allowed me to use the fort on the Island of Texel for this purpose. These circumstances, and particularly that of the fort in the Texel, infuriated the English government and put Holland in a situation so critical that the Estates General were obliged to insist that I should either leave the Texel or produce a commission from His Most Christian Majesty and remain thereafter under the French flag.

On this occasion, the prince of Orange sent Vice Admiral Rhynst to take command of the Dutch fleet in the Texel, which was composed of 13 double-decked warships. The prince knew this would give great pleasure to the English court, because M. Rhynst was an Englishman at heart.

While these arrangements were being made, I reembarked the wounded, who had been cared for in the fort, and I made all preparations to make sail for Dunkirk with my prizes and prisoners. But the Duke de la Vauguyon granted me an interview at Amsterdam and informed me that the intention of the king was that the vessels should remain in the Texel under the French flag because their capture by the enemy was thought to be certain if they should hazard putting to sea. His Excellency said everything he could to convince me to accept a commission which had been sent for that purpose from Versailles. Not having the legal authority to change my flag and dishonor myself by disavowing my first declaration, I refused this honor, because I had made a declaration as an American officer and had given a copy of my commission from Congress to the Dutch officer who commanded in the Texel. To have accepted the flag of France when I found myself between a crossfire in the Texel would have been to lose for His Most Christian Majesty all the merit of having placed the squadron under the flag of his allies. We daresay that it had never been unfurled with more glory than on this occasion. But although I had no other instructions from Dr. Franklin than to deliver all of my prisoners to the Duke de la Vauguyon, still this obliged me to put the *Serapis* and the Countess of Scarborough under his orders because *la Pallas* and *la Vengeance* could not hold all the prisoners.

It should be noted that on this occasion, before the eyes of all Europe, I made a sacrifice much greater than that made by any other officer in the Revolution. I

sacrificed the military pride that forbids an officer to leave his prizes or his prisoners, taken at such great cost, in a neutral port. It is recognized that under American maritime laws prizes belong exclusively to those who take them.

The captain of the Alliance, a Congressional frigate, having received orders from Dr. Franklin to return to Paris to answer for his conduct according to the wishes of the king, and finding myself with authority to do so, I sent on board the Alliance the rest of the officers and American crewmen of the Bonhomme Richard who had been transferred to the Serapis. Then, taking command of the Alliance, I continued to display the American flag while the rest of the squadron and the prizes flew that of France.

Monsieur Rhynst did what the Prince of Orange expected of him: he placed and kept his squadron in the best tactical position during the 6 week period after I came on board when storms and contrary winds forced the Alliance to remain in the Texel. Monsieur Rhynst, in a word, did all that he could, and more than would have been expected of an honest man, to make my situation dangerous and disagreeable.

Finally the wind became favorable, and on December 27, 1779, the Alliance made sail at 10 o'clock in the morning, having lost all her anchors but one because of the ill will of Monsieur Rhynst, who had ordered the Dutch pilot to allow the Alliance only one anchor. Thus, departing from the Texel I did not leave a friend in Monsieur Rhynst, and as I put to sea the odds were a hundred to one that we would soon have a serious affair with the enemy. I was, however, fortunate enough to escape from their vigilance, by hugging the coast and passing to the windward between them and the coast of Flanders. The next day I passed the straits of Calais to the windward, within sight of the vessels that cruised there and the squadron stationed near the Downs. The following day I saw the fleet at Portsmouth, and I passed near several cruisers. On January 1, I left the channel.

At the latitude of Hull, I had taken a pilot, John Jackson, who subsequently conducted himself very well. This poor man had lost his right arm while he helped service the pumps in the engagement of the Bonhomme Richard. As his boat had been of very considerable aid in saving the wounded, before the Bonhomme Richard had sunk, I returned his boat to him before leaving the Texel and made him a present of three complete outfits of clothes, with some linen and 100 ducats of my own money. Believing this pilot deserved half pay, that is, 30 livres per month, for the rest of his life, I consequently gave him a certificate to that effect, which neither France nor America has as yet honored.

It is public knowledge that Admiral Rodney was detained in England for two months, because the Baltic fleet stayed during that time at Scarborough. This shows what the importance of the Baltic fleet is to the English navy. If this fleet had been captured, it is probable that Admiral Rodney would never have relieved Gibraltar.

My presence and my conduct in the Texel greatly influenced the policies of the belligerent powers and contributed much toward enveloping Holland in inextricable difficulties. It is to be recalled that this was the first article of the declaration of war that England made on that republic.

I was extremely appreciative of the consideration the Duke de la Vauguyon showed me in Holland. This adroit ambassador rendered a most flattering account of my

conduct to the minister of the king, and conceived for me a deep attachment that will end only with life.

Because Captain Pearson of the Serapis conducted himself with so much bravery during the fight, I returned his sword to him before leaving the Texel, having already returned all the personal items belonging to Captain Pearson or to those who served under him that were found on board the Serapis and the Countess of Scarborough. I learned with particular pleasure that Mr. Pearson was received in England with great distinction: the king granted him the honor of knighthood, and he was given a silver service and the freedom of the towns on the east coast of England near the site of the battle.

After clearing the channel, I gained the latitude of Cape Finisterre, in the hope of taking some prizes and prisoners. I would have liked to have cruised along the coast of England, but I was unable to do so because the Alliance was badly equipped with sails and rigging and had only one anchor.

I encountered several ships but they all flew neutral flags. Finding myself at the latitude of La Corogne in Spain on January 16, 1780, I entered that port in order to procure a second anchor and to avoid a gale. After obtaining an anchor I returned to sea, and during my trip to Lorient I met a large American ship loaded with tobacco that I escorted to that port on February 10, 1780.

At Lorient, the repairs required by the Alliance were so great that she was not ready to return to sea until the middle of April, and because of the particular care I took with the repairs and the changes I had made, she had the reputation in Europe of being one of the best frigates of her time. I loaded on the Alliance quantities of military stores that the king was furnishing to the United States.

At the same time, the Serapis arrived in Lorient from Holland and the Countess of Scarborough at Dunkirk. The commissioner had convinced the minister of marine to take them for the service of His Majesty without previously putting them up for auction in accordance with American maritime law. As a result the minister sent orders to Lorient to disarm the Serapis and to make many changes, following the ideas of the officers of the port. As a result the Serapis was entirely disarmed, and before I was informed of what was taking place and without my having been consulted, they destroyed all of her magazines, her parapets, her galleries, and all the interior bulkheads, as well as one bridge from stem to stern.

This was not all - the commissioner had taken charge of all the money that had come from the sale of my merchant prizes. After I had written volumes of letters to reclaim the money from the prizes and for pay and was unable to obtain satisfaction either for my officers or for the men of my crew, I presented myself at court to seek justice.

Dr. Franklin accompanied me to Versailles and minister of marine Sartine, upon our request, issued orders for the sale of the prizes. Although it was evident that I had suffered from the extraordinary fatigue I had undergone, having slept less than 3 hours out of every 24 during the entire campaign from Lorient to the Texel, the minister, nevertheless, received me coldly and did not even ask me if I felt any ill effects from the wounds I had received.

As a result I did not ask the minister to present me to the king, but I went with Dr. Franklin to the levee of His Majesty and the next day the Prince de Beauveau, captain of the guards, did me the honor of personally presenting me to His Majesty.

At the opera, at the theater, and in all the places where I appeared, the public received me with enthusiasm and the most lively applause. This, added to the favorable reception I had from His Majesty, afforded me singular satisfaction. The minister of marine from that time on showed me marked consideration.

The Count de Maurepas informed me that His Majesty had resolved to confer on me a special mark of his royal favor and his personal esteem. This was a gold sword on which were engraved these extremely flattering words: "Vindicati Mans Ludovicus XVI remuneratur Strenuo Vindici" (reward from Louis XVI to the valiant avenger of the rights of the sea) with His Majesty's coat of arms, the symbols of war, and the emblems of the alliance between France and America, etc., and an important letter that His Majesty had written to Congress, proposing to confer on me the Ordre du Merite Militaire.

I was all the more anxious to find new ways of showing my gratitude for the honors that His Majesty had conferred on me since he had never given a gold sword to any other officer and because the Ordre du Merite Militaire had previously been given only to officers who had a commission from His Majesty.

Thus, after a conference with Monsieur de Maurepas, I gave this minister a written plan that would in all probability have been very advantageous to the common cause of France and America if it had been executed. The considerable increase in the size of the royal navy and the high mortality rate that occurred in the combined fleet made it important for France to obtain foreign sailors. And as several frigates of the royal navy were disarmed in port, I proposed to obtain the consent of Congress and to return from America to France with the Alliance and the remaining frigates and with the 74-gun America belonging to the United States. My plan was to bring to France on this vessel and on the frigates a large enough number of American officers and men to man the frigates mentioned above and to form in this way a light squadron of 10 or 12 sail.

On this squadron, under the flag of the United States, it was proposed to embark a strong detachment of French troops drawn principally from the Irish regiments to complete the crews, and then to make raids on England and to do there what the English fleets and armies did in America. But besides the advantages that would have resulted from shore operations, this squadron would have been the surest means of intercepting the fleets from Jamaica or the Baltic and would have done more damage to the enemy than any other military force of the same expense.

Monsieur de Maurepas, Monsieur de Vergennes, and Monsieur de Sartine were in agreement. In the ministerial letter written by order of His Majesty to recommend me to Congress, dated at Versailles, May 30, 1780, it was mentioned that "if Congress wished to entrust me with new expeditions in Europe, His Majesty would see me again with pleasure, and he assumed that Congress would not refuse me anything that was considered necessary to ensure the success of my enterprises."

I had intimated to Monsieur de Sartine how flattered I would be to transport to America the portraits of Their Majesties. Monsieur de Sartine had allowed me to hope

for this honor, but as I was obliged to depart before the portraits were finished, he soothed me with the same hope upon my return. He was, however, no longer in the ministry at that time.

Because the sale of the prizes was prolonged beyond my expectation, I tried without success to obtain an advance from the minister of marine against the pay and the prize money due to my officers and men, who had lost their personal belongings when the Bonhomme Richard sank and were nearly naked and without money. The procedures that had been followed concerning the prizes, in the Texel and at Lorient, had raised great and dangerous clamors among the officers and men of the Bonhomme Richard and the Alliance in the Texel, and even more so at Lorient, when they saw that the Serapis-their property-was being torn to pieces and greatly damaged without their consent.

Monsieur Landais, a Frenchman who had commanded the Alliance during the fight and who had been debarked at the Texel for his bad conduct, was then at Lorient on his way from Paris to America, to be judged there by a court-martial, and he inflamed the spirit of these Americans and persuaded them that they had served on a privateer fleet and that their only hope for justice was in America. And as Mr. Lee, recently minister of Congress, then at Lorient, joined them in this opinion for reasons known only to himself, the officers and crew of the Alliance mutinied against the rest of the crew of the Bonhomme Richard and declared they wanted to sail immediately to America under their first captain.

At the same time, I had obtained from the minister of marine the loan of one of His Majesty's frigates, l'Ariel of 20 guns, to help the Alliance transport to America a quantity of military stores and clothes that the king had ordered sent to the United States. I had left 400 men on board the Alliance, 150 of whom I could easily have put on l'Ariel, but this plan was upset by the conspiracy of Mr. Lee and Monsieur Landais, his tool. The officers of the Bonhomme Richard were greatly insulted on this occasion, and the rest of the crew of that vessel who remained faithful to me were clapped in irons on board the Alliance.

I had just returned to Lorient when this extraordinary event occurred. As Monsieur Thevenard did not act with the energy required of a commanding officer in that first moment when it would have been easy to calm this revolt, I returned to court to obtain extraordinary authority from the minister of marine, accompanied by Mr. Franklin. As a result, the most explicit orders were issued to the officers at Lorient and at Port-Louis to detain the Alliance and to imprison Monsieur Landais, as a subject of France, on a lettre de cachet.

They quickly prepared to detain the Alliance by alerting the warships and the forts and barricading the entrance to Port Louis. But Mr. Lee advised Monsieur Landais not to obey the king's lettre de cachet, so the affair became hopeless and Monsieur Thevenard signed the order to fire on the Alliance if the frigate tried to break out of the barricaded port.

Since the English could have considered this circumstance as arising from disagreements between France and America, and because in any case these ill effects would have dishonored the American flag, I was glad to show my moderation, not being able to consent to the spilling of American or French blood in order to give

myself a command. Therefore, I begged Monsieur Thevenard to retract his orders and open the entrance to the port, which was done, and the Alliance departed for America.

M. Thevenard assembled the principal officers, who signed a statement outlining the preparations that had been made to detain the Alliance, and who expressed their admiration for my conduct.

I have already reported that I had lost all of my personal belongings when the Bonhomme Richard sank, and it can be said that the revolt on the Alliance caused me to suffer about the same misfortunes.

Mr. Lee embarked on this frigate for America and during the voyage he formulated a second conspiracy that he executed by removing from command Monsieur Landais, who was arrested and brought to Boston as a prisoner. There a court-martial was convened, which cashiered this ill-advised man and dishonorably discharged him from the service for having seized command of the Alliance at Lorient. If he had been judged on his conduct while he was under my command, the charges against him would

have been of a nature to have put his life in danger. It was proved in Monsieur Landais' trial that Mr. Lee had put merchandise on board the Alliance that he would not have been able to embark under my command.

The minister of marine then gave orders for the complete rearming and refitting of l'Ariel. Only 45 men and officers from the crew of the Bonhomme Richard remained with me because the rest had been put in irons on board the Alliance until they reached America, without having received their pay or their share of the prizes. The 45 men were the only ones who were finally paid their salaries, after great difficulty, but not their shares in the prizes.

The Serapis, which had cost the English government 50,000 guineas six months before it was captured, was after a long delay sold to the king for 240,000 livres, one-fifth of what it had cost, which can only be attributed to the disarmament of this beautiful vessel and the destruction of the decks, magazines, etc., in accordance with the orders the minister had given before the sale.

My position at Lorient on l'Ariel, which had but 20 cannon, while the Serapis which I had captured was put under the command of a man who had done nothing to merit this honor, was a subject of reflection that did not escape men of good sense, and it was generally said that having killed the Lion, I deserved the skin.

Monsieur de Maurepas, however, did not forget the arrangements he had made with me for my return from America to Europe. This minister wrote me a letter, dated August 23, 1780, giving full approval to this plan and promising all the facilities that the government could provide to ensure its execution.

After l'Ariel was armed and ready to put to sea, I was detained for some time by contrary winds and storms. I left October 8, 1780, with a favorable wind, but the following night the wind became contrary, and I was driven by a furious storm close to the rocks of Penmark between Brest and Lorient. The storm became so violent that l'Ariel could not carry sail, and

not having enough room to run before the wind, she was nearly capsized. There was so much water in the hold that the pumps no longer sufficed.

Since the depth of the water rapidly diminished and there was no hope of saving ourselves if l'Ariel struck against the rocks, which are a considerable distance from land, I dropped anchor as a last resort. But after paying Out 200 fathoms of cable I was unable to head the frigate into the wind, and the ends of the main yards to leeward touched the water from time to time. As a result, I had no choice but to cut down the foremast. This produced the desired effects and l'Ariel immediately came into the wind. But the heel of the mainmast would not stay in place and its movement could be compared to that of an unsteady drunkard. Because there was great danger that it would break below deck or drive a hole in the bottom of the frigate, I had it cut down, and in falling it brought down the mizzenmast and the bridge.

In this condition l'Ariel held her anchor in open sea, in the wind, and on the edge of the most dangerous rocks in the world, for two days and three nights, in a tempest that covered the shores with wrecks and even endangered vessels moored in the port of Lorient. It is to be presumed that never before had a vessel been saved in such circumstances.

After the storm I had masts jury-rigged and I returned to Lorient and wrote to Monsieur de Castries, who had then become minister of marine, from there to ask him to exchange l'Ariel for the frigate Terpsicore, which I did not obtain. I was therefore detained in Lorient to remast l'Ariel until December 18, 1780, and then put to sea for Philadelphia. As I was entrusted with the court's dispatches for the past six months for the Chevalier de Ia Luzerne, the French fleet, and the army which was in America, I did not want to encounter the enemy during my passage. I could foresee purposes of much greater importance, namely, to obtain the approbation of Congress for my past conduct and to be returned to France in order to execute the plan that Monsieur de Maurepas had approved.

But after many encounters, I finally fell in with a frigate of 20 guns belonging to the English navy and called the Triumph. As this frigate sailed at much greater speed than l'Ariel, I was unable to avoid an encounter, but I maneuvered sails and rudder in such a manner, and I hid all the preparations for combat so well, that the enemy had no other thoughts than those of an easy conquest and a good prize.

At nightfall the Triumph steered within hailing distance of l'Ariel and the enemy were not a little surprised to find that they were up against forces equal to their own. As the two frigates were then flying the English flag, the captain of the Triumph, John Pindar, and I began a conversation from which I learned the exact state of English affairs in America. Finally I pretended to believe that the Triumph did not belong to the English navy, and I insisted that her captain come aboard to show me his commission. The captain excused himself, complaining that his boats were leaking and that I had told him neither my name nor the name of my frigate. I answered that I did not have to account to him, and that I would give him five minutes to decide. The time elapsed and l'Ariel being situated directly in front of and to the leeward of the Triumph, some 30 feet away, I hauled up the American flag and commenced firing.

In earlier combats I had never felt so satisfied as I did during this one with the regular and vigorous firing from the rigging and the batteries of l'Ariel. This resulted from plans and preparations made before the action by stationing passengers and the

officers of l'Ariel everywhere to stop men from abandoning their posts and to encourage everyone to do his duty, which demonstrates the great advantage of having several good officers. For never was there a crew worse than that of l'Ariel.

After a brief resistance, the enemy lowered their flag. The captain of the Triumph asked for quarter, saying that he surrendered and that half of his crew were dead. As a result I ceased fire, and as usual after a victory there were many huzzahs and cries of joy on l'Ariel. But a minute later the captain of the Triumph deceitfully set sail and fled. It was not in my power to prevent his flight, the enemy frigate being much faster than l'Ariel. But if the English government had possessed the sentiments of honor and justice that become a great nation, they would have delivered this frigate to the United States as their property and punished the captain in an exemplary manner for having thus violated the laws of war and the practices of civilized nations.

The enemy had been advised of my approach by the accident that had forced l'Ariel to return to France after being dismasted, and two English frigates had been stationed at the entrance of the Delaware to intercept me. But the two frigates had taken several valuable prizes and were escorting them to New York, and during their absence I arrived safely at Philadelphia.

The Chevalier de la Luzerne informed Congress that His Majesty had honored me with a gold sword and proposed to decorate me with the Ordre Royal du Merite Militaire; which would be, His Majesty presumed, considered by both sides as one more tie between the two nations, etc. As a result Congress postponed the general confederation of the United States for three days, in order first to pass a law authorizing me to be decorated with the Ordre du Merite Militaire; this took place on February 27, 1781. Congress instructed the minister plenipotentiary of the United States to the court of France to inform His Most Christian Majesty of the great satisfaction that Congress had received from the court of France by the letter of Monsieur de Sartine, dated May 30, 1780, in which that minister expressed the esteem and approval that His Majesty granted to my good conduct and my bravery in Europe and that the offer of His Majesty to award me his Ordre du Merite Militaire could only be infinitely agreeable to Congress.

Consequently, the Chevalier de la Luzerne gave a reception for all the members of Congress and the leading citizens of Philadelphia, and in their presence he invested me, in the name of His Majesty, with the Ordre du Merite Militaire.

The animosity that unfortunately prevailed among the three American ministers plenipotentiary at Paris had naturally produced contradictions in their reports concerning American affairs in Europe, and some people, who did not at all understand on what basis I had remained there for so long, had propagated in America their opinion that I was in Europe only to command a fleet of privateers. As a result, Congress ordered the Admiralty

to examine closely my relationship with the court of France and the reasons for the detention in Europe of clothes and military stores that belonged to the United States. The Admiralty posed a great number of questions to me by letter. To answer them, I entered into an explanation of all my conduct from the beginning of the war, and I revealed the details of my connections with the court and the reasons (insofar as I knew them) that had delayed delivery of the provisions of war and the clothes that had

been prepared in Europe for the army of General Washington. I documented my responses with more than 100 pieces of original or copied official letters.

This examination was followed by a report from the Admiralty to Congress, infinitely honorable for me, and one of the members proposed this question: "What shall we do for the man whom the king is pleased to honor?"

After this report from the Admiralty Council, Congress named a committee of three members to examine the measures and proceedings on which this report was based, and as a result of the account that was submitted by the committee, Congress passed an act on April 14, 1781, in which it approved and highly lauded my conduct and honored me with the most flattering thanks for the zeal, the prudence, and the intrepidity, with which I had sustained the honor of the American flag; for my bold and dexterous enterprises designed to redeem from captivity the American citizens who had fallen into the power of England, and in general for my good conduct and the eminent services by which I added luster to my own character and to American arms.

The committee was also of the opinion that I deserved a gold medal that would attest to the good wishes and thanks I had received.

At the time I had given my plan to Monsieur de Maurepas to form a combined squadron under the American flag to be manned by officers and sailors from the United States and by troops detached from French regiments.

And according to the most recent intelligence, it appeared then that the America, a new ship of 74 guns, was also ready for service.

It is therefore certain that half of the Congressionally owned frigates, with the ship America, would have sufficed to transport their own crews from America to France, plus a sufficient number of officers and sailors for the manning of the frigates that Monsieur de Maurepas had agreed to put under my command, and that there was every reason to believe Congress would adopt this plan.

But in the long interval of the delay I experienced in France after having given my plan to the minister and the voyage that I next made between France and America, the maritime forces of Congress had greatly diminished. The enemy had captured five frigates at Penobscot and Charleston, two others had been taken at sea, one had been driven ashore and seized, and one other was burned or lost in the breakers. So there remained only the Alliance of 36 guns, the Deane of 30 guns, and the America of 74 guns, which was still in the stocks in Portsmouth, N.H.

It is easy to see from these disastrous circumstances that it was not in the power of Congress to support the views of the court of France by sending me immediately back to France with the force of men and vessels that had been proposed. Congress, however, did not lose sight of this plan and on June 26, 1781, it unanimously chose me as commander of the 74-gun America. There had been talk of raising me to the rank of rear admiral, but this proposal was not supported by my friends in Congress because the United States did not then have sufficient forces for an officer of that rank. In these circumstances I returned l'Ariel to the Chevalier de la Luzerne. It was believed in Philadelphia that the America was so far advanced that she would be able to set sail for France by the beginning of winter, and the Congress then proposed to put under my orders the other frigates, that is to say, the Alliance of 36 guns, the

Deane of 30 guns, and a new frigate called the Bourbon, then on the stocks in Connecticut.

Now is the time to mention what happened on October 10, 1776, that is to say, three months after independence was declared. Congress made a new list of naval officers, in which all the brave officers who had generously exposed themselves at sea for the American cause and had captured New Providence found themselves preceded on the seniority list by newly appointed officers, who had not yet been in the service of Congress. If in this new list preference had been given only to men of superior and recognized ability, something could be said in favor of that choice; but this was not the case. Far from having merited preference, those who obtained it were without military experience. Exaggerating the dangers, they found pretexts not to embark on the first squadron, and they did not offer their services to Congress until after the question of independence was raised.

It is fair to add that throughout the Revolution none of them so distinguished himself as to merit the preference he had received. Although during the useful and glorious expedition to New Providence, I received early recognition of my faithful service; and although after that I gave further proof of my zeal, and on August 8, 1776, I received from the president of Congress the first captain's commission granted in the United States Navy, immediately after the Declaration of Independence; nevertheless, because of the arrangement of October 10, 1776, I saw 13 individuals pass ahead of me, none of whom had embarked from the commencement of hostilities.

Such an affront could not have happened to officers in a well organized service; if it had occurred, the officers would have inevitably resigned their commissions to save their honor. But I saw this matter from a different point of view. I was not fighting for seniority. My ambition concerned freedom for America, and I was willing to make the greatest sacrifices for this cause. Thus I considered myself less as an officer of Congress than as a man fighting for the cause of mankind. And I was persuaded that one day Congress would render me justice in regard to seniority, and it was in fact accorded me by the unanimous vote of that honorable body on June 26, 1781.

Upon my arrival at Portsmouth, N.H., I found myself involved in problems that neither my friends nor I had foreseen in Philadelphia. Instead of being ready to launch, the America was not half constructed, and there was neither wood, nor iron, nor other material prepared to finish the job. Even if there had been an abundance of money, and if it had been well employed, it would have been impossible to procure the men or the necessary materials to complete and launch the America in twice the time that had been proposed. But money was lacking. The Admiralty at Boston had used the funds which the finance minister had designated for the America for other purposes.

The construction of this vessel, which had been delayed for a year, was, however, immediately resumed and some progress was made before winter. In the course of that season the masts and the construction wood were prepared, and during the spring and summer the America was completed.

The most disagreeable service to which I was assigned during the whole course of the Revolution was to supervise the slow construction of this ship. But from start to finish, I never lost sight of my plan for forming a combined squadron of French and American frigates, supported by the America.

The enemy formulated several plans for the destruction of this vessel, and I was so informed by spies from New York, who also sent reports to General Washington and to Philadelphia. But despite my pleas for aid from the government of New Hampshire to guard and defend the America, I was not able to obtain a single soldier. I had, moreover, neither arms, nor powder, nor bullets, and there was not any way I could remedy this unless I procured the aid with my own money. So this is what I did. I also engaged two shipwrights to guard the ship alternately every night, with a party of carpenters that I also hired at my own expense. Since it was necessary to set an example, I took command of the guard every third night for the duration of the construction. By these measures the enemy was prevented from burning the America, although several times large boats with muffled oars entered the river for this purpose; but they did not dare come alongside after they learned that the watch duty was performed so carefully.

In the month of June 1782, the Chevalier de Ia Luzerne received orders from the court of France to announce to Congress the birth of a successor to the French throne, and the Congress issued orders for public rejoicing on this occasion.

Since the America was not yet armed, I was not included in the orders that were given by Congress for the celebration of the birth of the prince. But I would have felt too much regret if I had allowed an occasion which gave such joy to Their Majesties, and in which I sincerely shared, to pass by without any honors. I therefore put the necessary artillery on board the America and purchased with my own money the powder and everything else that was needed for this celebration, held in the following manner:

At sunrise the America, decorated with the colors of Congress and with the French flag being hoisted up forward, gave a 21-gun royal salute, to which all the forts responded.

At noon the same salute was repeated by the America and the forts. This was the signal for all the citizens to come take part in an elegant feast prepared for them at the townhall of Portsmouth. During the meal, according to the custom of the country, 13 toasts were made to honor Their Majesties and the new prince. At each of the toasts the America, alerted by a signal from the townhall, fired a royal salute, and all day until midnight she kept up a rolling fire of muskets and pistols.

As soon as it was dark, the America was decorated with brilliant lights, by means of huge lanterns that were designed for this occasion and placed all over the ship; when they were illuminated, fireworks commenced that lasted until midnight. The night was very dark, which contributed greatly toward giving maximum luster to the illuminations and the fireworks. The entire celebration so excited public curiosity that all the inhabitants of the city and the surrounding area assembled on the shore of the river and showed their admiration by their applause.

The close came at midnight with the firing of a royal salute by the America.

As a result, I had the honor to receive from the Chevalier de Ia Luzerne a very flattering letter dated from Philadelphia, July 29, 1782. However, there is reason to believe that the celebration I had at Portsmouth at my own expense was confused with those Congress had ordered and paid for.

The America was 50 feet 6 inches at her beam and 182 feet 6 inches long at her first gundeck, according to English measurements. Though this vessel of 74 guns was the largest of her class, because of the manner in which I had directed her construction the America appeared to be no other than an elegant frigate, and when the gunports of the lower battery were closed, a stranger at a distance of a mile would not have believed he was approaching a ship of the line. The work was completed so well that it greatly surpassed all that naval architecture had previously offered; and all that Abbe' Raynal needed was to have seen this ship to have given the world a more grandiose idea of the continent for which it was named.

It was no less true than astonishing that only 20 men were employed in the construction of this entire ship, despite the difficulties occasioned by the ponderous proportions of some of its parts. Several of the principal beams used in the first deck were hewn from single trees. I could not, however, answer for the expected lifetime of every piece used in this ship, because time had been too short to prepare each piece properly, and during the final stages of construction circumstances would not permit all the care one would have desired in the choice of masts. But it is certain that His Majesty could find good construction wood and masts more easily in America than in any other country.

An unfortunate accident deprived me of the command of this beautiful ship, the America, after all the time, all the effort, and all the personal expense that its construction had cost me. Le Magnifique, a 74-gun ship from the Marquis de Vaudreuil's fleet, was lost off Boston, and Congress seized this occasion to prove its gratitude to His Most Christian Majesty by voting on September 3, 1782, to present the America to His Majesty as a replacement for le Magnifique. She remained under my command until November 5, and then I delivered this ship to the Chevalier de Martigne, who had commanded le Magnifique and whom the Marquis de Vaudreuil had sent to Portsmouth to assume command of the America.

Immediately thereafter I went from Portsmouth to Philadelphia. After I had left the Texel, l'Indienne, the frigate of which I have spoken several times in these memoirs, had been lent by His Most Christian Majesty to the Prince of Luxembourg for three years, and the Prince of Luxembourg had leased it for a profit to an officer in the service of South Carolina. L'Indienne, after many delays, had consequently set sail to leave the waters of Holland and was at present in Philadelphia, having done nothing for the state of South Carolina but bring it heavy expenses. And as the Chevalier de la Luzerne had been empowered by the Prince of Luxembourg to claim payment for the lease of l'Indienne, and to take possession of that ship and dispose of it at the expiration of the lease, which was nearly terminated, he consulted with Mr. Morris, minister of finance. They decided to give me command of l'Indienne, along with two or three other frigates and some troops, with orders to capture the Island of Bermuda. But despite the measures taken to carry out this plan, it failed, and l'Indienne sailed out and was captured without resistance by a much inferior force.

As I foresaw that the plan conceived by the Chevalier de la Luzerne and Mr. Morris would probably not be carried out, I addressed myself to Congress without losing any time, and on December 4, 1782, I obtained an act from that body ordering me to embark on a ship of His Majesty's fleet at Boston, under the orders of the Marquis de Vaudreuil, scheduled to join the Count d'Estaing in his expedition against Jamaica, etc.

The prospect was very agreeable to me, because of all those who were assigned to serve on this expedition no one knew the Island of Jamaica as well as I, and since the Count d'Estaing had commanded a fleet of more than 70 ships of the line and a great army, I hoped to find myself in the best military school in the world, where I would be able to render myself very useful and would necessarily acquire very important knowledge about conducting large scale military operations.

The Marquis de Vaudreuil received me politely on board his own flagship, le Triomphant, and billeted me in the Council Chamber with the Baron de Viomenil, who commanded the land forces. The Marquis de Vaudreuil's squadron of 10 ships of the line, two frigates, and one cutter left Boston on December 24. The admiral's intention was to join at the latitude of Portsmouth with two other ships of the line, l'Auguste and le Pluton, then in that port and under the orders of his brother (as the America was still not ready to put to sea); but stormy weather and contrary winds prevented this juncture and put the squadron into a disagreeable situation because of the proximity of the coast and of the Bay of Fundy. The admiral then attempted to join the ship le Fantasque, carrying troops from Rhode Island, but this also failed. The squadron, having lost sight of several ships loaded with masts and 20 merchantmen being convoyed to Boston, set course for the island of Puerto Rico.

When that island was within sight, the Marquis de Vaudreuil was warned that Admiral Hood was cruising at the latitude of Cape Francois with 16 vessels of the line, and that Admiral Pigot, with greater forces, was at Saint Lucia, so that the enemy would necessarily consider the Marquis de Vaudreuil's squadron an easy prey that could not escape Hood or Pigot.

The Marquis de Vaudreuil remained at the latitude of San Juan, Puerto Rico, for 10 days, practiced all kinds of fleet maneuvers, and then took 16 ships from a large convoy that had arrived at San Juan from France and headed toward the western end of Puerto Rico.

Some of the flyboats sent to cruise by Hood perceived the squadron near the Mona Passage and immediately went to inform him that the Marquis de Vaudreuil was sailing south of St. Domingue on the way to some port on the west coast of that island or on the east side of Cuba, for the expedition to Jamaica. They were in error: the squadron headed south, into the wind, and passed to the leeward and within sight of the Island of Curacao, near the South American coast.

The rendezvous that had been agreed upon by Don Solano and the Marquis de Vaudreuil at Cape Francois after the defeat of the Count de Grasse was held in utmost secrecy, and no one had the least idea that it was Porto Cabello on the continent of South America at 20 leagues to the windward of Curacao. The squadron maneuvered for three weeks along the coast against a current that chased the transport ships out of sight to the leeward; and because they had neither pilots nor good charts of this coast on board the squadron, la Bourgogne of 74 guns foundered on rocks at night two leagues from the coast and went down with 200 men, including officers, among them the first lieutenant.

Le Triomphant arrived at Porto Cabello on February 18, 1783. L'Auguste and le Pluton had arrived there some days before and the other ships of the fleet came in safely, one after the other.

Don Solano had planned to meet with the Marquis de Vaudreuil at Porto Cabello in December. He did not keep his promise, and no news of his squadron was received at Porto Cabello. The anxiety that this uncertainty occasioned, combined with the lack of news from Europe, so deeply affected the spirit of several officers that they fell ill, and I myself was dangerously sick.

Finally the news of a general peace arrived by frigate from France. The most brilliant successes and the most instructive experience in the art of war could not have given me pleasure comparable to that which I felt when I learned that Great Britain, after such a long struggle, had been forced to recognize the sovereignty and independence of the United States of America.

On April 8, 1783, the day after the cessation of hostilities, the squadron left Porto Cabello, and after a voyage of eight days it arrived safely at Cape Francois.

The Spanish squadron had left Havanna for Porto Cabello, and upon receiving news of the peace at Puerto Rico it changed course for Cape Francois and arrived there a few days before the Marquis de Vaudreuil.

I remained only a short time at Cape Francois where I received the special favors of Monsieur de Bellecombe, the governor. I then embarked for Philadelphia, filled with gratitude for all the attention I had received from the Marquis de Vaudreuil, the Baron de Viomenil, and the other officers during the five months that I had been on board His Majesty's squadron.

I was not able to regain my health during the remainder of the summer in Pennsylvania; I recovered it only in autumn, with the aid of cold baths. I then addressed myself to Congress to be authorized to return to Europe to settle the claims of the officers and men who had served on the squadron I had commanded in Europe with the court of France. And Congress so authorized me by an act dated at Princetown on November 1, 1783.

In the arrangement of this affair, I wanted to take effective measures to prevent even the possibility of any reproach, and therefore I gave the minister of finance bond for 200,000 Rixdaller that he was to transfer to the Treasury of Congress, proportionately to the sums of money belonging to the citizens of the United States that I would recuperate, so the minister could pay individuals from the Treasury, hoping to prove by this that I had nothing to gain personally.

I embarked at Philadelphia November 10 in a small packet boat bound for Havre-de-Grace. Because this ship was very old and damp, I did not want to risk taking the sword with which His Most Christian Majesty had honored me, so I left it at Philadelphia.

The packet boat was forced by contrary winds to enter at Plymouth, and as I was entrusted with public dispatches of importance I immediately took the mail carriage for London and was so diligent that five days after my departure from Plymouth I reached Paris and delivered my dispatches.

The Marshal de Castries and the Count de Vergennes received me with great politeness, and when I gave them the letters of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, which

told them of the commission with which I was entrusted and in which he pointed out several things that were favorable to me, both assured me that I had no need of any recommendations to convince them to do me justice or to ensure me of their esteem.

The Marshal de Castries did me the honor of presenting me to the king on December 20, 1783, and after dinner this minister took me aside and told me on behalf of the king that His Majesty had been pleased to see me again, and would always be glad to further my interests.

The commissioner had taken possession of all money produced by the sale of the Countess of Scarborough and the merchant vessels and had retained it for more than four years without rendering an account to the captors on either the principal or the interest. He wanted to keep the prize money because the king, he said, owed him 109,179 livres, 15 sols, 4 deniers.

As soon as I informed the Marshal de Castries of this, he withdrew the papers concerning the prizes from the commissioner and gave them to Monsieur Chardon, maitre des requetes.

On February 10, 1784, the Marshal de Castries sent me Monsieur Chardon's report on the liquidation of the prizes, after that affair had passed from the commissioner's hands into his own, in order for me to inspect it. By this statement of settlement, the commissioner had evaluated all of the prizes at only 456,787 livres, 2 sols, 9 deniers, and he listed expenses so high that the result for the captors was a balance of only 283,631 livres, 13 sols.

Six months before the capture of the Serapis, it had cost the government of Great Britain 50,000 guineas and the Countess of Scarborough has cost them 22,000, which was in all 1,728,000 livres, but according to the liquidations of the commissioner the captors were credited for the Serapis only 96,875 livres, 2 sols, 2 deniers and for the Countess of Scarborough 59,198 livres, 5 sols, 9 deniers, which made for the two warships only 156,073 livres, 7 sols, 11 deniers.

On February 18, 1784, I sent the Marshal de Castries my observations on the work that M. Chardon had done for the settlement of the prizes pursuant to what had been proposed by the commissioner, showing again that when I entered the Texel in accordance with definitive orders, I was obliged by indispensable necessity to take with me the Serapis and the Countess of Scarborough, because the Alliance and la Pallas had neither enough water nor provisions and could not hold the remainder of the crew of the Bonhomme Richard along with the prisoners of war that numbered nearly 600.

As the great number of prisoners had been the main reason that prevented my ordering the Serapis and the Countess of Scarborough to head for America a day or two after being captured, and while the attention of the British navy was still fixed on the combined fleet in the channel and on the one commanded by the Count d'Estaing off the coast of America, it seemed unjust to me to charge the captors with any of the expenses incurred in Holland in regard to the two prizes. And it is impossible to find a single example that could justify the commissioner in having thus charged the captors for the expenses of provisions consumed by the crews of those vessels and by their prisoners of war.

If these two warships had been sent to America instead of entering the Texel, they would have been subject only to their will, being the property of the captors according to the laws of Congress. And it is to be presumed that these two prizes would have been sold in America without additional expense to the captors beyond their agents commission and for at least 30 percent above what they had cost the government of Britain.

Instead of that, the *Serapis* and the *Countess of Scarborough* remained in the Texel as prison ships for more than three months, and then they were brought to France at the risk of their captors, although they were not under their command, during the entire route and in the face of all of the ships England had sent out to intercept them.

When the *Serapis* had arrived at Lorient, the commissioner obtained orders from Monsieur de Sartine, in conformity with the intention of Mr. Franklin, according to what he claimed, to destroy an entire deck and the interior to make changes. This damage was done without the consent of the captors and without their knowledge. And the *Serapis* was so degraded that it was finally sold to the king for one-fifth of what it had cost England shortly before it was captured.

But what affected me more deeply than all the other circumstances in which I was involved during the American Revolution was a letter that I received from Mr. Franklin, dated at Passy, March 25, 1784, in which this minister plenipotentiary, speaking of the prisoners taken by the squadron and brought to Holland, said: "Not a one of them was exchanged for Americans in England, in accordance with your intention, and as we both had been led to hope."

The higher men are, the more their promises should be sacred. I had always counted to the utmost on those Monsieur de Sartine had made me in the beginning of our relationship and particularly on this one: "that the prisoners taken by the squadron will be exchanged for Americans in England." This was all the reward I had asked for my services, and I had spent many days in anxiety and many nights without sleep in the hope of liberating unfortunate American prisoners in England.

In the month of June 1784, I had personal reasons and affairs that absolutely demanded my return to America. Monsieur Chardon had finished the settlement of the prizes and the Marshal de Castries promised me a signed statement from him in time for me to embark with the Marquis de Lafayette. As a result I prepared for this voyage, but the delays occurring in the bureau made me lose not only this opportunity but the entire summer; and I did not obtain the statement of settlement of my prizes, signed by the Marshal de Castries, until October 23, 1784. By then my journey to America had been delayed too long and would no longer be of any use for the projects that had motivated it.

From the beginning of the alliance between France and America, I had resolved to place before the eyes of the minister of marine a plan to furnish the French navy with all kinds of construction wood, masts, tar, etc., from America. In the month of June 1784, I had the honor to present to the Marshal de Castries the first plan that had been produced for this purpose, showing the great advantages that would result for the commerce of both nations, as well as for the royal navy of France. The Count de Vergennes and Monsieur de Calonne, to whom I also addressed my plan, received it in a most favorable manner, and the Marshal de Castries told me that the information

he had obtained in connection with my plan had convinced him to send a shipwright to America to examine the wood before acting on the contract.

Although the Marshal de Castries had signed the statement of settlement for my prizes on October 23, 1784, I was nevertheless forced to wait until the end of July 1785 before being able to obtain orders authorizing payment. I was then obliged to make a trip to Lorient where I was detained until September 5, 1785, before receiving from Paris the letters of credit necessary to divide the prize money that by the final settlement was due to the Americans on the crews of the *Bonhomme Richard* and to the crew of the *Alliance*. By this final settlement the captors were authorized to receive for the *Serapis* and the *Countess of Scarborough* the sum of 257,085 livres, 2 sols, 6 deniers, which was a little more than one-seventh of what these prizes had cost England before they had been captured. The reason was that the captors were charged for the expenses of their prizes both in Holland and in France, and that they were granted nothing for their three months' service in the *Texel* as prison ships, nor were they compensated for the degradation inflicted on the *Serapis* at Lorient by order of Monsieur de Sartine before she was sold.

The officers of the *Bonhomme Richard*, who, after the mutiny on board the *Alliance* in the port of Lorient, had been brought in irons on that frigate from France to America, still had a claim to 20,548 livres, 9 sols, 8 deniers representing their salaries for which I found myself responsible by the terms of the contract I had signed with them, and which I will be unable to satisfy until this sum is paid to me out of navy funds.

During the course of the war I had never found a means of returning to the *Countess of Selkirk* the family plate I had been obliged to allow my men to take at the time of my Scottish expedition on the *Ranger*. I had purchased this plate at a very high price from my men; they thought they could not make me pay too much for it. I had planned to send it from Lorient by sea, when that place became a free port; but, unable to find the opportunity, I wrote the Count de Vergennes to obtain permission to ship this plate from Lorient to Calais by land. This minister considered my letter and sent it to Monsieur de Calonne, who not only granted me the permission I had requested but wrote a flattering letter to me on this occasion. As a result the plate was transported to London and deposited there in the name of Count Selkirk, free of all cost or expense. I received from this lord a letter full of gratitude for the delicacy of my conduct and the strict discipline of my men.

It was noted at the proper time that Monsieur de Sartine had promised to place 500 men from the Regiment Irlandais de Walsh on the squadron I commanded. However, this embarkation never occurred; but the officers of that regiment manifested their lively desire to serve with me, and three junior lieutenants obtained permission from the court to do so. One of them, Lt. James Gerard O'Kelly, was killed in the engagement between the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis*. The other two received orders at the *Texel* to rejoin their regiment then embarking for the West Indies. I gave them testimonials of good conduct, particularly during the engagement with the *Serapis*, when one of them, a Mr. Stack commanded a party in the mainmast rigging, and the other, Mr. MacCarthy, had been slightly wounded in the powder magazine where the cannons exploded.

By presenting my certificates to the minister of war on December 12, 1779, they were immediately promoted from junior lieutenants to captains, and they received a

monetary award for the loss of their belongings when the Bonhomme Richard sank after the battle. I was deeply moved by the credit placed on the recommendations I had given, and I am sincerely flattered to learn that on February 17, 1785, His Majesty in his bounty awarded Mr. Stack an annual pension of 400 livres and that the following April 10 he deigned to do the same for Mr. MacCarthy, and that these two pensions had been awarded for their good conduct on board the Bonhomme Richard. In addition the Count d'Estaing, the Marquis de Lafayette, and the Marquis de Saint Simon added their recommendations to mine in order to obtain the privilege for Mr. Stack and Mr. MacCarthy to be decorated with the Order of the Cincinnati.

These two young officers merited the rewards they received for their services on board the Bonhomme Richard; but because they left the squadron in the Texel, their service was of short duration in comparison to the other officers who served under my orders. And even in this battle several junior officers of the Bonhomme Richard were more meritorious than they and yet received nothing for their bravery, not even indemnity for the loss of their personal belongings when the sea swallowed the Bonhomme Richard.

Although I felt obliged, during the American Revolution, to refuse a commission in the navy of His Majesty, nevertheless I presume that I could be considered as having been in the service of His Majesty from February 10, 1778, the time when I presented my plan for the first expedition in America, which was commanded by the Count d'Estaing, or at least from the following June 1, when Dr. Franklin informed me at Brest that His Majesty wanted me to journey to Versailles. And although in the realization of my projects I have been sometimes countered by various circumstances, I dare flatter myself that His Majesty is convinced that my zeal was never dimmed by all the obstacles I had to surmount.

It is true that after my return to America in 1780 my services were less brilliant and less useful than I would have desired. My passage to America on l'Ariel, frigate of the king, was of some utility, however, in delivering important dispatches to the minister plenipotentiary to Congress, as well as for the fleet and army of France. And the sword with which His Majesty honored me was not degraded in the fight between l'Ariel and the Triumph.

May I be permitted to say that, if I had not been entrusted with the construction and preservation of the America, if I had not sacrificed 18 months of my time and procured at my own expense the means of guarding it from the enemy during that time, this warship would never have appeared on the roster of the royal navy of France.

As Jamaica was better known by me than by any other officer assigned to the projected expedition against that island, I presumed that I could render some services in that campaign; at least I showed my good intentions by embarking with the marquis de Vaudreuil.

Personal gain was never the reason for my public actions; I had more noble motives. And far from making my fortune from the Revolution that took place in America, I consecrated to this great cause the 10 best years of my life, without Interruption, as well as my rest and a part of my fortune and my blood.

During the entire period of my connection with the court of Versailles, I served without salary, as a volunteer; the losses I suffered on the Bonhomme Richard when it sank and in the mutiny of the Alliance at Lorient added to my extraordinary expenses over a very long period of time amounted to at least 200,000 livres for which I never requested indemnity.

On December 20, 1783, the king was kind enough to instruct the Marshal de Castries to inform me that His Majesty "would be very pleased to further my interests." This is all the more flattering to me since it was in relation to the letter that His Majesty ordered Monsieur de Sartine, then minister of marine, to write to Congress in my favor on May 30, 1780, in which it is said that the king "would like to add his commendation and favors to the public acclaim. He has expressly charged me to inform you how satisfied he is with the services of the commodore; convinced that Congress will render him the same justice, etc." .

Among several proofs of the generosity of His Majesty in regard to the republic then being born in America, that of putting a squadron under the flag of Congress contributed greatly to assure His Majesty of the lasting gratitude of the United States. And perhaps the time will arrive sooner than one would think when I will have an occasion to merit the flattering compliments with which Monsieur de Sartine honored me, when he, as minister of marine, sent me the sword of His Majesty on June 28, 1780, with these words: "His Majesty has had a sword of gold made for you that will be presented to you soon; and he has the greatest confidence in the use you will make of it for his glory and that of the United States."