

LIFE OF

CAPTAIN JEREMIAH O'BRIEN

ANDREW M. SHERMAN

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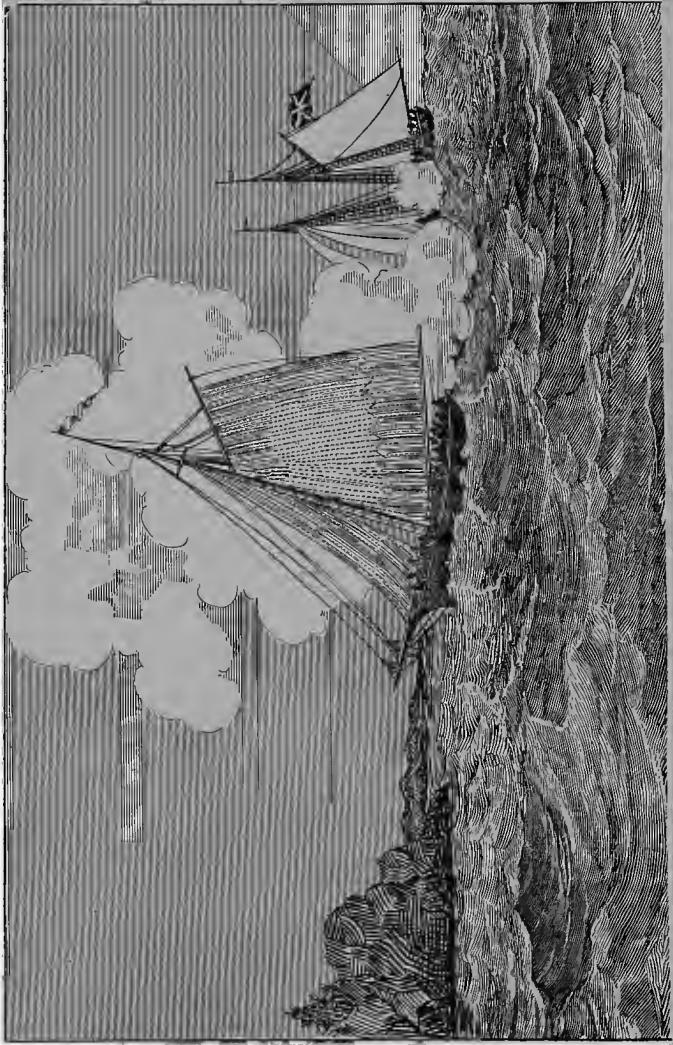
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THE FIRST SEA FIGHT OF THE WAR OF THE REVOLUTION

Engagement between the American sloop "Unity" in command of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, and the British armed vessel "Margaretta," in command of Captain James Moore, in Machias Bay, June 12, 1775, resulting in the capture of the latter vessel.

"The shout of battle now began, and rushing sound
Of onset ended soon each milder thought."

LIFE
OF
Captain Jeremiah O'Brien
Machias, Maine

COMMANDER OF THE FIRST AMERICAN
NAVAL FLYING SQUADRON OF THE WAR
OF THE REVOLUTION : : : : : : : :

—
ILLUSTRATED



By REV. ANDREW M. SHERMAN
Author of "Morristown, N. J., in the Spanish-
American War," etc.

GEORGE W. SHERMAN, Publisher

1902



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MORRISTOWN, N. J.

To the Honorable John D. Long

A native and a loyal son of the Pine Tree State,
and the highly efficient Secretary of the United States Navy
during a critical and brilliant epoch of our national history,

this volume is

Respectfully and Sincerely Dedicated

by the author

ERRATA.

Page 229, 4th line from top of page, for *Halifax* read *Annapolis*.



Preface

One of the most unique and interesting characters of the War of the Revolution was Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, of Machias, Maine. The services rendered by him, as naval commander, as military officer and as privateersman during the period mentioned, contributed in no inconsiderable measure toward the achievement of independence by the American Colonies.

The subsequent career of Captain O'Brien as business man, as government official and as private citizen was also more than ordinarily interesting. To permit the details of such a life to lapse into oblivion would be an injustice to this famous Revolutionary character, and a positive loss to future generations of American citizens. With the exception of casual references here and there upon the

pages of United States history, very little is recorded concerning the stirring life of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, beyond the story of his two brilliant naval victories in Machias Bay during the summer of the year 1775; hence the publication of the volume now offered to the people of this country, in which the author has aimed to place Captain O'Brien on record in suitable form for preservation for future generations. It is no slight indication of the probable demand for a biography of Captain O'Brien, such as is now offered to the American public, that, in a recent communication from a native of the Pine Tree State who was aware of the preparation of this volume by the author, there occurred the following emphatic sentence: "It should have been done long ago!" It has appeared to the author that a more favorable season would never occur than the present for the preparation of a life of Captain O'Brien, since much of the data now available would doubtless have perished with the generation now passing away, had it not been gathered up and put into form for preservation.

Twice has the author visited historic Machias, Maine,—the last time having been during "Home Week," in the year 1900—for material and inspira-

tion for the preparation of this biography; and in neither instance nor in either respect was he disappointed in his quest. With the aid of camera and kodak numerous photographs of historic buildings and famous localities and interesting spots were secured in Machias and vicinity, with which to illustrate the volume now published. At the various repositories of historical and genealogical lore in Boston an entire month was spent by the author in the search for data; and no little data has also been procured through a wide correspondence extending over a period of several years. Indeed, no expense or effort has been spared in the endeavor to make the biography of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien as complete and satisfactory as the circumstances of the case would permit. Some data bearing upon the later life of Captain O'Brien has come to hand from interested friends too late for use in the present edition. The author hereby gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness for several pieces of valuable information and several interesting photographs to the following named individuals: Mrs. Mary O'Brien Brown, Mr. George W. Drisko, Mr. William C. Holway, Mr. William H. Phinney, and Captain F. W. Bowker,

of Machias, Maine; Miss Annetta O'Brien Walker, of Portland, Maine; and Mrs. Josephine O'Brien Campbell, of Cherryfield, Maine.

Andrew M. Sherman.

Morristown, New Jersey,

July 1, 1902.

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Introduction.

Mr. Sherman has rendered good service in writing in full detail the life of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, portions of the proofs of which it has been my privilege to read.

There is to-day a widely reviving interest throughout our country in the heroic characters of our Revolutionary period. This is exhibited in the many clubs and associations formed by their descendants in honor of their memory, and with a view to keeping alive the inspiration of their service. Recent events have roused a special interest, however, in our navy; and the names of its earlier heroes are becoming as familiar as household words. While this interest in the brave deeds of our ancestors is perhaps first associated with their prowess in arms and their fighting exploits, it really and better is a recognition of the spirit of heroism, patriotism, public service, devotion

to the common welfare and to high ideals. It is not so much that in rough and ready encounter, Captain O'Brien and his fellow-citizens (for that is the proper term rather than his crew) attacked, boarded and captured, with swivel and pitchfork and flint-lock musket, the British war vessel *Margaretta*, but that in this bold, spirited and determined fight in Machias Bay, off the little frontier village of Machias, he did his duty as Paul Jones did in the larger battle of the *Bon Homme Richard* and the *Serapis*, and was animated by the same spirit that animated Hull on the deck of the *Constitution*, and that fired Decatur in the very teeth of destruction to board and burn the *Philadelphia*, or Somers on the *Intrepid*, or Farragut lashed to the mast of the *Hartford*, or Wainwright driving the frail *Gloucester* against the Spanish torpedo boats. It is all the same characteristic quality of the American sailor, unflinching, never turning back, driving victory home—something that is more than personal courage or the absence of craven fear, and is rather that ultimate nerve which dares assume responsibility and to risk and court rather the chance of success than the chance of failure. O'Brien's brilliant feat in capturing the *Margaretta*

has, however, this special significance, that it was not merely the personal heroism of a single encounter, but was the first challenge of the infant American navy to the giant and almost omnipotent naval power of Great Britain. Independence spoke in the voice of its cannon and in the very word of command of its captain. It was the first in the series of the glorious victories of the Yankee sailor, and O'Brien, full Yankee though of Irish descent, deserves to rank with our naval heroes.

It was with this in mind that the present writer gave O'Brien's name to one of the torpedo boats now building for its navy by the United States.

Mr. Sherman gives a graphic picture of O'Brien's naval exploits which by no means ended with the fight in Machias Bay, but included service all along the coast, sometimes in command of the "Flying Squadron," capturing prizes, and extending through the war. His career, like that of so many a sailor-man, was full of romance. He shared the usual vicissitudes of fortune, was taken prisoner on the sea, subjected to the horrors of the *Jersey* prison-ship, taken to England and incarcerated there, though after a year effecting his escape.

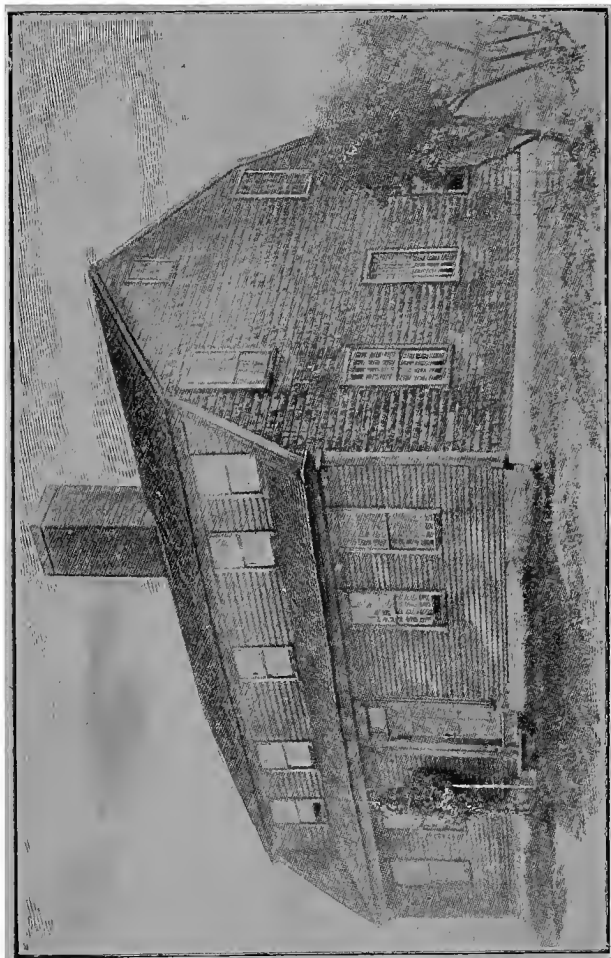
The story of O'Brien's later life as a citizen, as collector of customs, and in the usual duties of a foremost man of his section is interesting. It is a type of the strong, earnest, forceful New England character in the early days of the republic. He was evidently one of those masterful leaders who in war or peace, in the social or political arena, were always at the front, the recital of whose lives is an education in strenuous citizenship and an incitement to the efficient discharge of the duties of the patriot.

JOHN D. LONG.

Hingham, Mass.,

May 27, 1902.

LIFE OF
CAPTAIN JEREMIAH O'BRIEN
MACHIAS, MAINE



THE "HANSCOM HOUSE," OR "BURNHAM TAVERN," MACHIAS, ME.

This house, which is still (1902) standing, is of the same style, architecturally, as the house built, and occupied by Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien, on the southern bank of the Machias river. "The above house was built in the year 1770. Colonial mansion houses and taverns that have echoed the guns of America's struggle for independence are rare. Here is a fine example of that period. Its entire outline, the chimney, the front door, the very sash and glass of the windows and clap boards on the walls are the same that were placed there by the builders. They sheltered the wounded from the 'Lexington of the Sea,' for this old tavern was used as a hospital after the engagement of June 12, 1775, between the American sloop "Unity" and the British armed schooner "Margareta." This was the first armed resistance to England on the sea—occurring in the same month with the fight at Bunker Hill, and seven days previously." See page 12.



LIFE OF CAPTAIN JEREMIAH O'BRIEN

OF MACHIAS, MAINE.

CHAPTER I.

CHILDHOOD, YOUTH AND YOUNG MANHOOD

Parentage and Birthplace of Jeremiah O'Brien—Removal to Scarborough—Early Fondness for the Water—Acquires the Rudiments of Navigation—Prospecting Trip to Machias—Removal to Machias—Engages in the Lumber Industry—Joins the New Military Company—One of the Original Proprietors of the Township—Builds a Colonial Residence on the Banks of the Machias River—Description of His Place—Chafing under British Tyranny—One of the Foremost Leaders in the Community—Jeremiah O'Brien Described—Tribute to His Character.

“Childhood shows the man
As morning shows the day.”—*Milton*.

“The youth who hopes the Olympic prize to gain,
All arts must try, and every toil sustain.”—*Horace*.

“Young men soon give, and soon forget affronts;
Old age is slow in both.”—*Addison*.

TO Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, of Machias, Maine, *unquestionably belongs the peculiar honor of having been the “Yankee” commander in the first naval engagement, resulting in the first victory, of the War of the American Revolution; and, of having subsequently commanded, in connection with the same war, the first American armed cruiser, and the first American naval “flying squadron.”* “I do not know of any feat in

all the war, that for daring and desperate courage can be compared with it,"—(the capture of the British armed schooner, *Margaretta*, by the American sloop, *Unity*, in command of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien) says an intelligent historian*. The verdict of another discriminative writer of history is, that: "All in all the capture of the *Margaretta* was one of the best conceived and executed plans of the seven years' war."†

Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, the subject of this biography, was the eldest child of Morris O'Brien‡ and Mary O'Brien, and was born in the year 1744, in the town of Kittery, Maine. The incompleteness of the family and town records as kept in Colonial days renders it impossible for the author to substantiate *from them* the above statement, as to the exact place of Captain O'Brien's birth. That he was born in America there is, however, no question whatever in the minds of those best qualified to judge in the matter. Indeed, Captain O'Brien himself explicitly stated, but a few years prior to his decease, that his parents were married in Kittery, or in Old York, Maine, *and that he himself was born in Kittery*. The author can conceive of no more trust-

* Hon. George F. Talbot, of Portland, Me.

† George W. Drisko, Esq., Machias, Me.

‡ For a life-sketch of Morris O'Brien, including his honorable Irish ancestry, see Appendix.

worthy evidence as to Captain O'Brien's birthplace than his own explicit statement; and this, as it seems, should settle for all coming time the question as to the place of his birth, upon which there has been entertained and expressed such a variety of opinion. That Captain O'Brien was born in Machias, Maine, as several writers affirm is glaringly incorrect to the student of American history, since the town was not permanently settled by the English until the year 1763, which, as the reader will notice, was nineteen years subsequent to Captain O'Brien's birth.

About the year 1750, as nearly as can now be ascertained, the entire family of Morris O'Brien, which included several small children, removed to Scarborough, Maine, situated on the sea coast, and about fifty miles northeast from Kittery. It was probably during his residence in the seaport town of Scarborough, that Jeremiah O'Brien, while still a youth of about ten years, acquired his fondness for the sea, of which the poet appreciatively speaks as:

"The impassioned orator with lips sublime,
Whose ways are arguments which prove a God!"

and it was probably here, also, that under the efficient tutorship of his father, he acquired the rudimentary knowledge, at least, of the science of navigation. In corroboration of the suggestion above offered the author begs to present the following extract from a

modern writer:* “He (Morris O’Brien) taught them (his sons) to read and spell, to handle the plough, the pitch-fork and the rifle, to raft timber and *sail a boat*.” The rudimentary knowledge of the science of navigation thus acquired by Jeremiah O’Brien during his residence in Scarborough, effectually aided him in after years in attaining to the conspicuous and honorable place in the annals of American history which he now, by common consent, occupies.

In the year 1764, Jeremiah O’Brien, then twenty years of age, accompanied his father and next eldest brother, Gideon, and a few other residents of Scarborough, on a trip by water to Machias, Maine, situated, as the maps indicate, in the extreme southeastern corner of the state, for the purpose of viewing the country (of which they had already received glowing accounts) with reference to permanently settling there; and, so well pleased were they with the prospect presented that in the spring of the following year (1765) the father and two sons above-mentioned removed thither for the purpose of engaging in the lumber business, and making for the family a new home.

Machias, it may be here remarked, had been

* Foxhall A. Parker, in “The First Sea Fight of the Revolution; the Capture of the *Margaretta*.”

permanently settled by the English only two years previously (1763) and mostly by persons from Scarborough, (of the eighty persons who settled Machias fifty-four were from Scarborough) who had been attracted thither by the abundance of timber and grass which the region afforded; and upon the lumber industry, chiefly, the town, with its population of about twenty-five hundred, has since been developed to its present flourishing condition. From a local historian* the following interesting extract is presented: "They (the prospectors in 1762 from Scarborough) found hundreds of acres of marsh, covered with to them, invaluable grass, which had never known the mower's scythe, and which was rendered doubly valuable to them by its scarcity at home. And here, too, their keen practical observation discovered a wilderness of untouched pine timber forests, overhanging a water power of almost unlimited extent, unoccupied, and at the head of tide-water navigation. What more could our enterprising voyagers desire? Was it surprising that their hearts should be light and joyous, and that they should return animated by visions of future success and prosperity which naturally sprang up in their minds, when comparing the devastations at home, with these new

* William Bartlett Smith, in "Historical Sketch of Machias."

regions of unoccupied water power, interminable forests of timber and extensive marshes covered with grass?"

In the early autumn of the year 1765 the entire family of Morris O'Brien were brought to Machias, and were settled on the southerly side of the Machias river (which divides the northern and southern sections of the village) and temporarily, at least, near the southerly end of what has for many years been known as the "lower bridge," so-called, because, of the three bridges in the village, this one is lowest down in the direction of the harbor. Soon after their arrival in Machias, the O'Briens, that is to say, Morris O'Brien, and his two eldest sons, Jeremiah and Gideon, in conjunction with five other of the more recent settlers, began the erection of a double saw mill on the southerly side of the Machias river; and early in the month of March following (1766) it was completed and ready for operation. This mill, which was the second to be erected in the town, was named the "Dublin Mill;" the first—the "Phoenix Mill"—having been erected on the northerly side of the river, in 1763-4. The "Dublin Mill" was so named in commemoration of the fact that Morris O'Brien, the principal owner, was born and bred in the city of Dublin, Ireland; and for the same reason the entire section of the village of Machias lying on

the southerly side of the river, one of the most important in the township, has for many years borne the name of "Dublin." A few years later than 1766, Jeremiah O'Brien and his father and brother, Gideon, in conjunction with John Underwood of Kittery, Maine, erected another saw mill on the southerly side of the Machias river. The "Dublin Mill" above mentioned it may not be uninteresting to local readers, particularly, to know, was erected on the same site as that occupied by the present mill bearing the same name, which is, however, of more recent construction. Captain John O'Brien, the third son of Morris O'Brien, spoke of his father as having come to this country "from Cork, Ireland;" but in view of the incontrovertible evidence in support of the fact that Morris O'Brien was born in Dublin, the explanation of the apparent discrepancy is to be found in the presumption that he came from the city of his birth (Dublin) to America via Cork, where he may have briefly tarried before sailing for this country; or, he may have lived for a time in Cork before coming to America. The most convincing proof, however, that Morris O'Brien was born in Dublin, is the explicit statement to that effect of his eldest son, Jeremiah O'Brien, made during the closing years of his life.

Upon the organization, in the year 1769, of the first militia company in Machias, Jeremiah O'Brien became

a member of it; and in justification of this apparently uncorrobrated statement we beg to quote from a local historian* of excellent repute the following: "In 1769, a military company of nearly one hundred men was formed. Stephen Jones was chosen Captain, Benjamin Foster (afterwards Col.) Lieutenant, and Sylvanus Scott, Ensign. Jones' commission is dated Aug. 7, 'in the ninth year of the reign of his majesty George the Third, appointing him Captain of a military company of foot, at a place called Machias, in the Regiment of Militia in the County of Lincoln, whereof Thomas Goldthwaite is Colonel.'" Now as a company of "nearly one hundred men," at the date of its organization as already given, would, without a doubt, have included the entire male population of Machias capable of performing militia service, it requires no elaborate argument on the part of the author to substantiate the statement previously made, that Jeremiah O'Brien, then twenty-five years of age, was a member of the first "military company of foot" in Machias. From the thrilling story of his paternal great-grand father's military services in Ireland, under the brilliant leadership of Patrick Saarsfield, the eminent Irish patriot†, as frequently related

* William Bartlett Smith, in "Memorial of the Centennial Anniversary of the Settlement of Machias."

† It is probable that Jeremiah O'Brien's paternal great-grandfather participated in the famous "Battle of the Boyne," fought on the first day of July, 1690.

by his father about the family hearthstone, Jeremiah O'Brien had, it is safe to say, early imbibed the martial spirit; hence, it is not difficult to conceive that when the opportunity offered he was among the first to enter, with all the overflowing ardor of his young manhood, into the above mentioned military movement inaugurated in this new lumber settlement in what was then the wilds of eastern Maine. While actively identified with this military company Jeremiah O'Brien probably acquired the knowledge of military drill, and the experience in military discipline, of which, as the reader will in due time learn, he made such eminently practical use, on land and sea, in after years.

When, after several futile attempts to procure a grant of a Township of land (first from Nova Scotia, within whose jurisdiction they at the beginning supposed themselves to be, and subsequently from the General Court of the Massachusetts Province) the inhabitants of Machias again petitioned the latter named body for the same object, we find, among the list of eighty male petitioners (there was one female among them) the name of Jeremiah O'Brien,* as well as that of his father, and next eldest brother, Gideon; and when, on the twenty-sixth of April, in the year

* See page thirty of "Memorial of the Centennial Anniversary of the Settlement of Machias."

1770, the tract of land was finally granted, he became, as one of the original proprietors, the owner in fee of two hundred and fifty acres of land situate on the southerly side of the Machias river, and extending from the river front toward the sea on the south. Jeremiah O'Brien's land had a frontage on the river of sixteen hundred and fifty feet, with a suitable depth to make up the area allotted to him. Among the conditions upon which this Township of land was granted were the following: "They (the petitioners) should within six years after they should obtain his majesty's approbation of the grant, unless prevented from so doing by war, settle the township with eighty good protestant families, build eighty houses, none to be less than eighteen feet square and seven feet stud—clear and cultivate five acres of land on such fit for tillage or mowing—that they build a suitable meeting house for the public worship of God, and settle a learned protestant minister, and make provision for his comfortable and honorable support.

* * * * *

In July of the next year (1771) the Proprietors voted to hire a minister to preach the Gospel in this place, and raised the sum of eighty shillings on each right in the township for the support of a Gospel minister for so long a time as one can be hired for that sum. The whole amount raised was £84. The committee

appointed for this purpose engaged Rev. James Lyon, a native of Princeton, New Jersey, educated in the college there, and had received a Presbyterian ordination; and in the spring of 1772 he began his pastorate. He was to receive £84 salary, £100 as a settlement, together with a right or share in the Township. This offer he accepted, and continued to preach here until he died in 1794." Rev. Mr. Lyon was one of the leading spirits in Machias and vicinity in the war of the Revolution.

* * * *

"In 1774, the first meeting house was built near the site of the Town Hall in this village. It was one story in height—twenty-five feet wide and forty-two long. Its cost was two hundred and twenty dollars.

Besides its church uses, this building was used for plantation and proprietor's meetings, as well as for schools; and when Washington County was established, the terms of the County Court were held there for several years."*

As a proof of his excellent success in the lumber industry it may be said, that about the year 1774, Jeremiah O'Brien erected, on an elevation on the southerly side of, and overlooking, the Machias river,

* "Memorial of the Centennial Anniversary of the Settlement of Machias," by William Bartlett Smith.

and about a thousand feet back from the same—a two-story dwelling house. This house had a gambrel roof, and was of the same style, architecturally, as the famous "Hanscom House," still standing in Machias, a picture of which may be seen in this volume. Jeremiah O'Brien had doubtless, up to this time, lived with his parents in the eighteen-by-eighteen house on the banks of the Machias river, which stood somewhat to the east of the house erected, as above stated, by himself. It is probable, that after the completion of Jeremiah O'Brien's house, his parents, until their decease, had a home with him. Like most houses in those early days and in that locality, the house of Jeremiah O'Brien was painted red. It was of somewhat larger dimensions than its prototype,* with a larger chimney, and having a one-story ell, with a shed roof, running out from the southwestern corner, which was used as a work-room in connection with the adjoining kitchen. The O'Brien residence, which was situated on the road to Machiasport, and about half a mile below the "lower bridge," faced to the north, toward the Machias river, thus affording from the front of the house a splendid view to the occupants, of the northern portion of the village. A few feet in the rear of, and running parallel

* The "Hanscom House" is said to have been erected in the year 1770.

with, the house, was the road leading to Machiasport, which was about four miles to the southeast. From either river front corner of the house there ran, in a slightly outward diagonal course, a row of handsome poplar trees nearly to the water's edge, furnishing in the summer months a refreshing shade; and adding materially to the otherwise picturesque appearance of the place. At the eastern end of the house was a plum orchard and at the western end an apple orchard. The diurnal rise and fall of the placid Machias; the handsome craft that, upon the bosom of the stream, plied their busy commerce; the ships that rose majestically from rude keel to towering mast, in the adjacent shipyards; the launching of the ships and all the circumstances attending these interesting occasions; the unceasing grate of saw and thud of hammer and swash of wheel in the village mills; the beautiful tree-crowned hills that rose like ever-watchful sentinels, above, and in the rear of his home; the ever-enjoyable view of the northern village across the glistening waters of the river—these made the site selected by Jeremiah O'Brien for his house, almost, if not quite, an ideal one for residence. There is scarcely a doubt that the site selected for his house was suggested to him by the oft' repeated descriptions given by his father of his own early home on the green banks of the Liffey river,

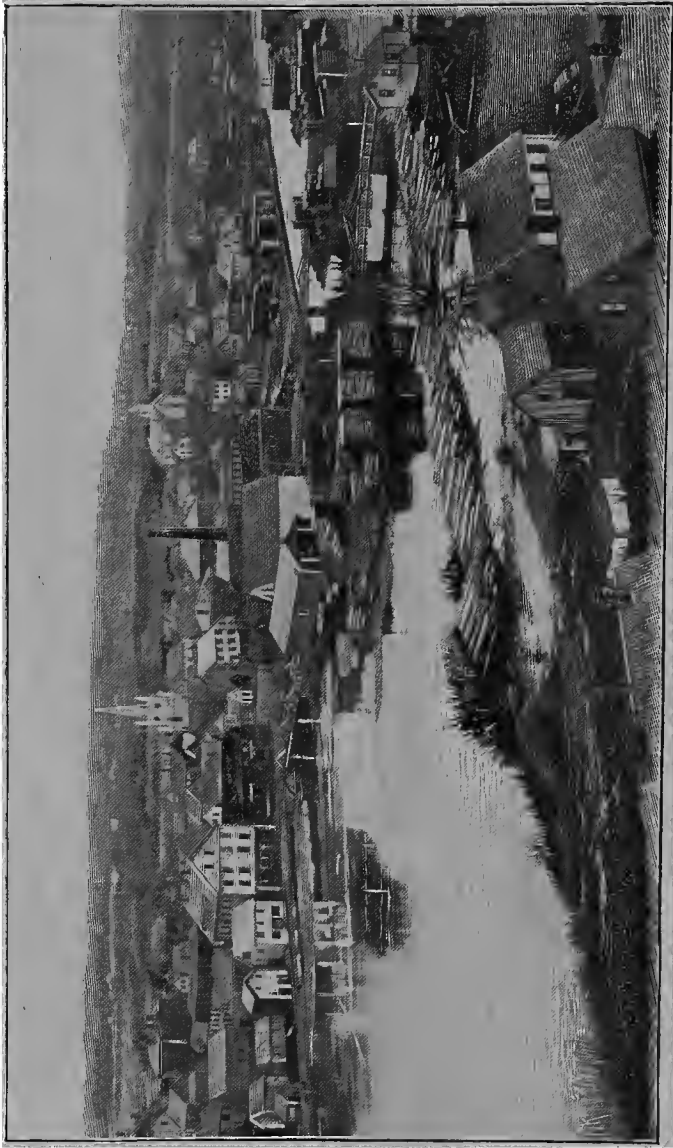
which, as the reader will notice, runs through the city of Dublin, Ireland, emptying into the famous Dublin Bay which has for many years been commemorated in popular ballad. About midway between the house and the river, and somewhat to the east as one went toward the latter, was a ledge of rocks embedded almost level with the ground-surface; and near this ledge, perhaps issuing from its fissures, there flowed during Captain O'Brien's lifetime, the water from which the household needs were supplied. The ledge remains, but for some reason the bubbling spring has ceased flowing. In this volume may be seen a picture showing the ledge of rocks, which may be readily located by the white spots visible on the bank sloping down to the river. About five hundred feet back, and up, from this ledge of rocks, and near several handsome elms, conspicuous, in the picture just mentioned, by reason of their unusual height, is the site, approximately, of Captain O'Brien's house; a depression in the ground surface, still to be seen by the observing visitor, marks definitely the location of the cellar. Another picture may be seen in this volume, which shows the site of Captain O'Brien's house from a view-point on the Machiasport road, the site as shown in this latter picture is approximately indicated by a clump of thrifty lilac bushes; the house probably stood somewhat to the left of the bushes.

Captain O'Brien, it may be here remarked, lived in the house above described until his decease, in the year 1818, except of course, while absent from Machias during the War of the Revolution. He occupied as his sleeping apartment the ground-floor room on the southeast corner of the house. The parlor was on the northeast corner; and on the southwestern corner was the kitchen, and the one-story ell already mentioned. There were also two small sleeping rooms at the northwestern corner of the house, both opening out of the large kitchen. On the second floor, and presumably over the spacious kitchen, slept Richard Earl, popularly known as "Dick," the colored servant who for many years lived in Captain O'Brien's family. On the second floor, and in the southeast corner, was the closet in which Captain O'Brien kept his Revolutionary relics. In the parlor of this colonial residence hung a picture of Washington, of whom Captain O'Brien was an ardent and life-long admirer, and whom he was frequently heard to extol in the highest terms. for his lofty character, of which, his disinterested patriotism was not the least noticeable; and also for his commanding ability as a military leader. The fact that he had several times, by invitation, dined with Washington, was ever after a source of gratification to Colonel O'Brien. In the same room there hung also the family coat of arms,

and perhaps an old portrait of Brian Boru, an Irish king, who as early as the year 978, reigned in regal pomp in Munster, Ireland; this portrait was brought from Ireland by Captain O'Brien's father. Several copies of this interesting portrait are extant. From an ancient Irish King Captain O'Brien claimed lineal descent. Among the other articles of special interest to be seen in Captain O'Brien's parlor, were two punch bowls, one of which had been broken, and the pieces of which were held together by a gold band and rivets. Captain O'Brien, in the latter part of his life, was a moderate user of snuff, and he was fond of exhibiting to his friends a gold snuff box bearing, on its lid, a representation of Thomas Jefferson.

We have been thus definite in the description of what, to the general reader, at least, of the present generation, may seem like trifling particulars; but the author feels quite certain that as the years of our national life increase, there will be a growing appreciation of any data, be it ever so insignificant comparatively now, in connection with the home life of so prominent a Revolutionary character, as the subject of the present biography will appear to have been, when the facts of his really brilliant career are fully and properly laid before the American people, and by them given unbiased consideration.

Captain O'Brien's house was torn down about



VIEW OF MACHIAS, ME.

The above view was taken from a point on the southerly side of the Machias river. Libby Hall and the First Congregational Church edifice may be seen in the background; the former to the right and the latter to the left of the center. The Methodist and Universalist Churches, (not visible in the picture above,) are somewhat to the left of the Congregational Church so conspicuous in the background.

Machias in the year 1780, it may be remarked, was a village of about twenty houses. There was at that time a small fortification mounting seven guns, with a garrison of fifteen or twenty men. The trade of Machias was wholly in fish, lumber and furs, and there being but little money, the settlers were ready enough to barter for West India goods. Machias now has a population of nearly 2,500.

the year 1835; presumably to make place for the construction of other and more modern buildings, by the new owners into whose hands the property had passed; thus removing what had been for many years one of the most conspicuous and interesting landmarks in historic Machias. A native of the village,* and a lineal descendant of Gideon O'Brien, the eldest brother of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien,—in a recent letter to the author, says: "I remember how sorry I was to see the Colonel's old house torn down. I only wish it were standing now, for it was one of the peculiar houses of the period."

The inhabitants of Machias, during the few years preceding the commencement of the War of the American Revolution, were neither silent nor submissive witnesses to the persistent encroachments of the mother country upon the liberties of the colonists, as sacredly guaranteed to them by the Colonial charter. Whenever the people met together, whether in private or public, the absorbing theme of conversation was the discussion of "the situation," and the earnest expression of indignation against the government across the water; and again and again was it insisted by the inhabitants of Machias, that the short-

* Mrs. Henry F. Harding, wife of Rev. Henry F. Harding, for several years pastor of the Congregational Church of Machias, and, subsequently of the Congregational Church of East Machias, Me.

sighted policy of Great Britain could not fail, if longer continued, to cause a rupture between the Colonies and the mother country. Deplorable as such rupture and its inevitable consequences to the colonists would prove, it was felt and declared to be preferable to the condition of slavery to which they were being reduced by a selfish and greedy home government. The state of mind of the citizens of Machias with regard to the tyranny of the mother country was aptly summed up in the following language to be found in a petition presented by them in the month of May, 1775, to the General Court of the Massachussetts Province, of which Maine was then a part: * * * “the iron chains of tyranny, which were forming for us, and from *servitude equal to Egyptian bondage.*”

Morris O'Brien,—we now quote from a reliable authority,*—“was a sturdy patriot, who hated everything English, the church not excepted, since, although he was not a Roman Catholic, he was an ardent dissenter; and he had taken care to instill his principles and prejudices into the minds of his boys (of which he had six) at all times and in all places, as he had taught them to read and spell, to handle the plough, the pitchfork and the rifle, to raft lumber

* Foxhall A. Parker, in “The First Sea Fight of the Revolution; the Capture of the *Margaretta.*”

and sail a boat; and the result of the old man's training was made manifest in the conduct of his sons." It is not surprising, therefore, that among the conspicuous leaders of Machias, in the vigorous and oft-repeated protest against British aggressions, was Jeremiah O'Brien, the eldest son of Morris O'Brien, the prosperous lumberman. Since his arrival, in the year 1765, in this isolated frontier town, Jeremiah O'Brien had been one of the foremost leaders in the sports of the new settlement, as well as in effort for its material developement; and he maintained his prestige as to leadership in the community as long as he lived. He could swing a woodman's axe; raft the prostrate timber through the river to the mills; transform the rough logs into marketable lumber; throw a contestant in a friendly wrestling match, or drive a shrewd bargain for the disposition of lumber with the master of a coasting vessel, with equal ease; and yet Jeremiah O'Brien was neither bully nor brawler nor miser, but a young man of "excellent character." At the opening of the War of the American Revolution he was thirty-one years of age. In height he was somewhat above the average, being probably about five feet and ten inches. He was in build well proportioned, and weighed about one hundred and seventy-five pounds when in good flesh. In physical strength he was an athlete, both inherit-

ance and his own mode of life having contributed to this effect; and he was not, by any means, lacking in agility. He was of light complexion, having blue eyes, and hair of a light brown hue. A prominent nose added character to an otherwise strong face; which, in the latter part, and presumptively in the early part, of his life, was beardless. Jeremiah O'Brien was large-hearted and kindly-natured, and generous to a fault; one of the sort—rare in this peculiarly commercial age—who gave more than was asked or expected of him, whatever the nature of the thing contributed. As illustrative of this characteristic it may be said that one whose privilege it was to ask money of Colonel O'Brien, in the latter part of his life, has since remarked: “He never declined giving me money when I asked for it; and he always gave me more than I asked for.” No less an authority than *Horace* has said that:—

“The truly generous is the truly wise ;
And he who loves not others, lives unblest.”

From the disposition and ability to contribute to others' needs Colonel O'Brien doubtless derived much of the pleasure of living. “He was a worthy man, a benefactor of the poor”—is the eulogy pronounced upon Colonel O'Brien, by a recent writer; and that it is well deserved is not for a moment questioned by those acquainted with his character and life. He

was impulsive in thought and action, rather than deliberate and calculating; and although he may have appeared at times to enter upon undertakings without having counted the cost, it was in appearance only, for by a sort of intuition he was able to see the end of an enterprise from the beginning, and, with reliance upon his powers of achievement, he engaged in it with unfaltering confidence of ultimate success. In his likes and dislikes Jeremiah O'Brien was strong. Into whatever undertaking he entered he threw his whole soul; indeed, he could do nothing by halves; he was, in other words, well endowed with the quality of earnestness, of which a famous author* remarks: "Earnestness is the best gift of mental power, and deficiency of heart is the cause of many men never becoming great." Of the O'Brien's of Machias, of whom Jeremiah O'Brien was an excellent representative, a recent author† in an article in one of our popular monthlies significantly speaks, as "a bold and energetic Protestant family * * *

* * * There is one element of the character of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien which should not go unmentioned, as an explanation, if for no other purpose, of the persecution of which he was for several years,

* Bulwer.

† M. E. C. Smith, in "Machias in the Revolution and Afterward," in the New England Magazine.

during the War of the American Revolution, the object—reference is here made to his outspokenness, which, coupled with an intense patriotism, called down upon his head the fierce wrath of the tories of Machias, of whom there were not a few, and whose activity, owing to their proximity to Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, was bold and aggressive. To say that Captain Jeremiah O'Brien was possessed of a high sense of honor is but to assert what his entire career as naval commander, business man and government employee clearly confirms—honor, of which it has been said: "'Tis the finest sense of Justice which the human mind can frame." As to his patriotism, already casually mentioned—we may say, it was of the sort that *withheld nothing from his country within the scope of his ability to give*; in illustration of which statement it may be said that for the benefit of his crews, whose wages were insufficient and irregularly paid, he expended, while in command of the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent* during the War of the Revolution, nearly his entire wages. "A gentleman has ease without familiarity; is respectful without meanness; genteel without affectation, insinuating without seeming art."* It is the testimony of one whose acquaintance with Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien was intimate:—"He was a gentle-

* Chesterfield.

man." It was no ordinary tribute to the character of Captain O'Brien,—the fact,—that among those whom Rev. James Lyon, pastor of the Congregational Church, of Machias, was disposed to choose as companions in his contemplated invasion of Nova Scotia during the War of the American Revolution, was Jeremiah O'Brien, then (1775) thirty-one years of age. In writing to Washington concerning the proposed expedition to Nova Scotia for the purpose of adding it to the American colonies, Mr. Lyon says: "Your Excellency may enquire about me as much as you please, of * * * * * Captain O'Brien, and * * * * * for these gentlemen I should choose to have as companions."



CHAPTER II.

OPENING OF THE REVOLUUION.

Imminence of War—Tribute to Machias Patriotism—Vague Reports of Lexington and Concord Engagements Reach Machias—Jeremiah O'Brien Assists in Raising a Liberty Pole—Arrival from Boston of the *Unity* and *Polly* conveyed by the British Armed Vessel *Margaretta*—Discrimination of Captain Ichabod Jones in the Distribution of Provisions—Town Meetings Dominated by Jeremiah O'Brien and Brothers—Opposition to Lumber being taken to Boston for the British Army of Occupation—Threat of Captain Moore of the *Margaretta* to Burn the Town—Machias Patriots Thoroughly Aroused—Local Conflict Imminent. Reinforcements Requested from Neighboring Villages—Jeremiah O'Brien Attends a Secret Meeting of Patriots—War Fearlessly Declared at "O'Brien's Brook"—Unsuccessful Attempt to Make Captain Moore a Prisoner—*Margaretta* Pursued Down the River—Brisk Engagement—The British Vessel to be Captured at all Hazards—British Threats Received by Machias Patriots with Shouts of Derision—The *Margaretta* Safely Anchored for the Night.

"Freedom's soil hath only place
For a free and fearless race."—*Whittier*.

"To have freedom, is only to have that which is absolutely necessary to enable us to be what we ought to be, and to possess what we ought to possess."—*Rehel*.

"Better to dwell in Freedom's hall,
With a cold damp floor and mouldering wall,
Than bow the head and bend the knee
In the proudest palace of slaverie."—*Moore*.

"'Tis home-felt pleasure prompts the patriot's sigh
This makes him wish to live, and dare to die."
—*Campbell*.

WHEN war with the mother country became imminent the people of Machias, notwithstanding their remoteness from the commercial centers of Colonial days, and their proximity to the loyal British provinces of Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, fearlessly resolved to join the patriots of Lexington and Concord in their armed resistance to the persistently pursued aggressions of the home government, whose armies and fleets had already invaded American territory. "They were going to war with him" (King George the Third), says an authority* already quoted, "without one thought of the chances, and without waiting to know whether another colony or another man was likely to back them." Of these sturdy frontiersmen it may with special aptness be said: "They dared be in the right with two or three." And the women of Machias, not a few of whom bore a highly commendable part in the struggle for national independence, may with splendid propriety have said, with the women of long ago:

"We are brave men's mothers, and brave men's wives,
We are ready to do and to dare;
We are ready to man your walls with our lives,
And string your bows with our hair."

Too much praise can scarcely be given the inhabitants of this extreme frontier town for the truly noble part borne by them, in the early months, particularly,

* Hon. George F. Talbot, of Portland, Me.

of the War of the American Revolution, for at the opening of this war there were less than one hundred single men in Machias (some authorities place the number at eighty); they were, as already remarked, isolated from the other colonists; they were without the sinews of war; they had only provisions for a few weeks, and a further supply would almost certainly be rendered impossible by a vigilant foe—and yet, alone and apparently helpless, these brave spirits virtually declared war against Great Britain, and for a period of two years so harassed and humiliated their powerful foe, that Machias received from the British authorities the significant name of the “Hornet’s Nest.”

A vague report of the engagements at Lexington and Concord had reached Machias early in the month of the May following these occurrences, and, according to some authorities in the latter part of April. Some writers inform us that the report was brought by a sailing vessel from Boston,—which the author ventures to say seems the more probable source of information—while others tell us it was brought overland by mounted couriers, and these latter authorities even describe the arrival of the fiery steed, white with foam, and jaded from the long and difficult journey across the intervening country, which was “a roadless, almost pathless wilderness, above which,

in three or four places only, rose the smoke from the cabins of solitary settlers." As to the roads, which extended only twenty miles to the westward of Machias—to quote a well-informed writer—they “were infamous”; hence the chief means of communication with the colonists to the westward was by water. The sailing distance to Boston from Machias was not far from three hundred miles, which, with propitious weather, would occupy several days.

It was not many days after the engagements at Lexington and Concord that the officials of Machias received the Proclamation of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, “authorizing and requiring preparations and efforts incident to a state of hostility.” Under the leadership of the bolder spirits of the village, among whom were Jeremiah O'Brien, and his brothers, Gideon and John, a liberty pole—or more accurately speaking, a liberty tree—was raised, as a symbol of the Freedom they and their compatriots were fully resolved to achieve. There is some difference of opinion as to the exact location of this liberty pole, or liberty tree, which consisted of a tall, straight pine tree, with limbs and foliage all cut away except a large green tuft at the extreme top. By some it is said to have been set up in front and somewhat to the left of where Libby Hall now stands—as one approaches it—and on the same side of the present

roadway. By others it is said to have been on the opposite side of the roadway near the site of the Smith residence. From a modern author* we beg to quote the following: "Accordingly, the next day a public meeting of the inhabitants was called, at which it was voted to comply fully with the requisitions of the proclamation of the Provincial Congress.

* * * * *

and, as a symbol of their resolutions, it was by acclamation voted that a Liberty pole be immediately erected. On the adjournment of the meeting, the O'Briens and a number of the more active spirits set about the work. Selecting the tallest tree they could find, they stripped it of its branches, leaving a tuft of verdure at the top. In the meantime a deep hole had been dug in which to plant it; and long before sunset, amid the shouts of the assembled inhabitants and the discharge of muskets, the tall pole was set and secured. This work accomplished, the people gathered around it and solemnly pledged themselves to resist the oppression of the mother country, and if occasion called, to sacrifice their property and shed their heart's blood, in defence of the colony. After this exciting scene they gradually dispersed, firmly but anxiously awaiting the course of events."

* George W. Drisko, Esq., of Machias, Me., in "The Liberty Pole; a Tale of Machias."

On Friday, the second of June, 1775, there arrived at the mouth of the Machias river, from Boston, two sloops, the *Unity* and the *Polly*, belonging to Captain Ichabod Jones, a well-to do merchant of the above mentioned city, who, almost from the settlement of Machias had been the broker and commercial agent—or, as another writer has expressed it, “the moneyed partner”—of the inhabitants. Captain Jones was bringing the household goods of several resident families of Boston, including those of his son, who, to escape the distress of threatened war were fleeing the city, already in possession of the British, and removing temporarily to Machias. These vessels, which probably remained at the mouth of the river a day or two, confirmed the indefinite report previously received concerning the engagements between the British regulars and the Colonists at Lexington and Concord; and through letters received from friends in Boston and vicinity, brought by these vessels, the particulars were learned—how forty-nine Americans had been slain; how Jonathon Harrington, after being mortally wounded on the Green at Lexington, had dragged himself to his own front door, a few rods distant, where he dropped dead at the feet of his wife; how at the Concord bridge next day, Abner Hosmer and Isaac Davis, had been slain; and how, from behind fences and stone walls, the

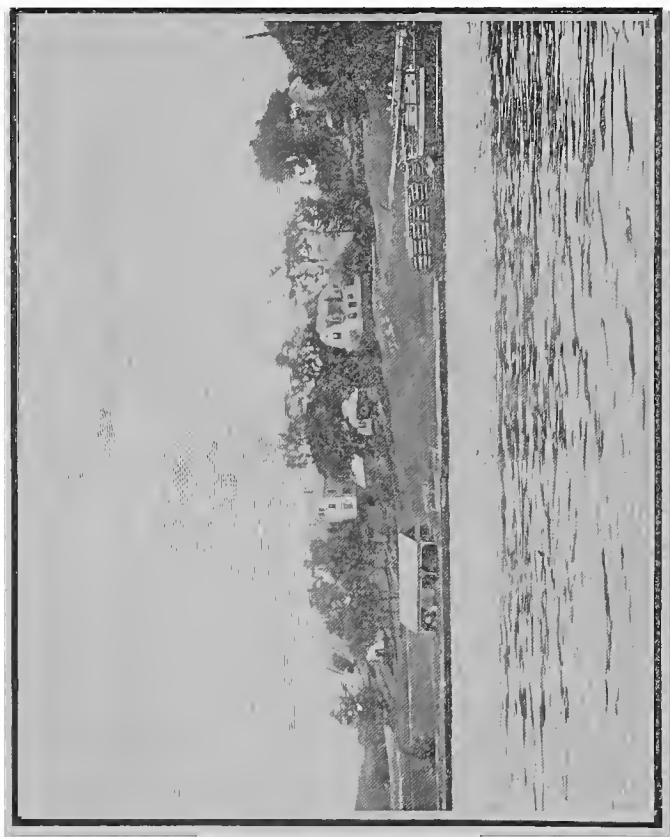
Colonists, among whom were old men and youths, had harrassed the retreating British regulars, causing not a few of them to "bite the dust" of Massachusetts roads.

On board the *Unity* were provisions for the inhabitants of Machias, who at that time had scarcely three weeks' supply on hand. It should be here remarked that for a period of ten years Captain Jones had furnished the people of Machias with provisions, for which he had taken their lumber in exchange. Captain Jones' sloops were convoyed by the British armed vessel *Margaretta*, of about one hundred tons burden, and carrying four four pound guns and twenty swivels. She had a crew of about forty men, in command of mid-shipman James Moore, a relative—some say a nephew—of Admiral Graves, commander-in-chief of the British naval forces in Massachusetts waters. On Saturday, June 3, which was the next day after his arrival at Machias, Captain Jones caused to be circulated among the inhabitants a paper, or contract, for them to sign, giving him permission to load his sloops with lumber for Boston, and agreeing, also, to protect him in so doing; and he made the signing of this contract the condition on which he would furnish the inhabitants with the provisions brought on the *Unity*, of which he well knew they were in great need. The paper did not, how-

ever, receive a sufficient number of signatures to satisfy Jones. Judging from the character of the man, as known by the author, he has no hesitation in saying that among those who declined to sign Jones' contract was Jeremiah O'Brien; who, foreseeing war with the mother country, and mistrusting, as did a few others in the village, that the special kind of lumber desired for Jones' sloops was intended for the use of the British army of occupation in Boston, was opposed to its being carried thither, on the ground that it would be giving aid and encouragement to his country's enemies. The citizens of Machias were also required, as we have seen, by the paper put in circulation by Jones, to protect him in the loading of his sloops with lumber for Boston; but Jeremiah O'Brien was the last man in the world to permit the British authorities to make "a tool" of him for the furtherance of their own selfish ends. Protect Captain Jones, as an agent of the British government? Not he!

Failing in his attempt to thus procure the assent and protection of the inhabitants of Machias to the loading of his sloops with lumber for Boston, Captain Jones, with the aid of Stephen Jones, Esq., his nephew, a resident merchant of the village, had a meeting called, to be held on Tuesday, the sixth of June, that the matter might be submitted to a vote

of the citizens. At this meeting Captain Jones made a statement, in which he claimed that he was required by Admiral Graves, as the condition of his being permitted to leave Boston with provisions, to make the promise that he would return with cargoes of lumber; and that the *Margaretta* had been sent as a convoy by Graves to insure the fulfillment, on his part, of this promise. Jones also presented to the meeting what purported to be a petition from the selectmen of Boston requesting him to return and remove other families from the city. There is little doubt that among the minority who in this meeting voted against "Jones' scheme," as it has been called, was Jeremiah O'Brien; but in spite of his strenuous opposition, and that of others who saw "eye to eye" with him in the matter, a majority of those present acceded to Captain Jones' proposition. This they did, however, as a matter of expediency, since the inhabitants were greatly in need of provisions; and since, also, they supposed themselves to be wholly at the mercy of the guns of the *Margaretta* anchored in the river but a few rods distant from their homes. It may be needless to remark that these conditions counted for but little with such bold, energetic and resourceful men as Jeremiah O'Brien and a few others, in whose active minds plans were perhaps already beginning to take shape for the deliverance



VIEW OF SOUTH BANK OF THE MACHIAS RIVER, MACHIAS, ME.

In this picture may be seen, a few feet back and up from the river, several conspicuous white spots; these mark the site of the ledge of rocks, and of the bubbling spring from which Colonel O'Brien's household were supplied with water. To the right, and somewhat back from the ledge, may be seen, near the high elms, the site of Colonel O'Brien's house. The house was torn down about the year 1835. See page 14.

of the distressed inhabitants from their dilemma. Had it been absolutely certain, however, that the lumber to be loaded on to Jones' sloops was to be used for the British army in Boston, the citizens of Machias in public meeting assembled would, without a doubt, have voted without a dissenting voice against Jones' proposition, in spite of their sore need of provisions, and of the helpless condition in which the majority supposed themselves to be. But the fact is that up to this time it had only been surmised, even by the more alert citizens of the village, that the lumber Jones desired was to be used for the British army in Boston; and not until a few days afterward, when it was too late to remedy the matter by a rescission of their vote, was it ascertained, by an examination of papers found on board the confiscated *Unity* and *Polly*, that both of Captain Jones' sloops were in the employ of the British government. The following extract from a public document* furnishes a striking confirmation of the statement above made: "Since the express left this by whom we transmitted an account of the *Margaretta*, one of the King's tenders, we have discovered, upon examining the papers, that both of Captain Jones' sloops, of about 80 tons each, were in the King's service."

* Communication of the Machias Committee of Safety, of June 17, 1775, to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts.

Upon the adjournment of the meeting of June 6, just mentioned, Captain Jones at once brought his sloops to the wharf in the village, and began the unloading and distribution of the provisions to the inhabitants, preparatory to loading his vessels with lumber; but he discriminated in favor of those who had "favored him," refusing credit to such of the citizens as had opposed his carrying lumber to Boston. If any proof of this statement is required, we beg to quote the following language:* "After obtaining this vote, Captain Jones immediately ordered his vessels to the wharf, and distributed his provisions among those only who voted in favor of his carrying lumber to Boston." Jeremiah O'Brien and his two elder brothers, it is safe to say, were among the number to whom Jones, contrary to his custom, refused credit; since they had at every step endeavored to thwart his pet scheme. If, as an ancient author declares: "The first step to wisdom is to be exempt from folly,"—then Captain Jones can hardly be credited with the display of wisdom in his policy of discrimination in the distribution of provisions, for he defeated the very end he sought.

The liberty pole erected by the "heroic O'Briens" and other citizens of Machias soon after receiving the

* From the communication of of the Committee of Safety, of June 14, 1775, to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts.

report of the affair at Lexington and Concord, standing as it did, upon an elevation in the village overlooking the river, was a conspicuous object, as indeed, it was intended to be; hence it is not difficult to imagine that Captain Moore, from the quarter-deck of the *Margaretta*, lying at anchor in the river but a few rods distant, was deeply irritated by the sight of it; for it greeted his eyes as he issued from his cabin each morning: as, day by day, he paced to and fro on his quarter-deck; and it smiled significantly upon him as he doused his glim," and turned in for the night. The following extract from "The Liberty Pole, A Tale of Machias," will give the reader an insight into Captain Moore's state of mind with regard to the symbol of Freedom erected by the patriots of Machias: "Observing the Liberty Pole, Captain Moore landed, and demanded of a group who had collected around the landing-place, who had erected it. "That pole, sir," answered John O'Brien, "was erected by the unanimous approval of the people of Machias." "Well, sir," rejoined the officer, "with or without their approval, it is my duty to declare it must come down." "*Must come down!*" repeated O'Brien, with some warmth; "those words are very easily spoken, my friend. You will find, I apprehend, that it is easier to make than it will be to enforce a demand of this kind." "What! Am I to

understand that resistance will be made? Will the people of Machias dare to disregard an order, not originating with me, gentlemen, but with the government whose officer I am?' 'The people of Machias,' replied O'Brien, 'will *dare* do anything in maintenance of their principles and rights.' 'It is useless to bandy words,' rejoined the officer, a little nettled at the determined spirit manifested around him; 'my orders are peremptory and must be obeyed. That Liberty Pole must be taken down, or it will be my painful duty to fire upon the town.'" Stephen Jones, Esq., a nephew of Captain Ichabod Jones and a resident merchant of Machias, made it his business to see Captain Moore, with whom he had considerable influence, whom he persuaded to defer the execution of his threat, representing to him that if a public meeting of the citizens were called they might vote to have the liberty pole taken down. A meeting was, therefore, called, with the result that the pole was allowed to remain. Again Captain Moore, fearing the loss of prestige with his crew if his threat remained unexecuted, fixed a day for firing upon the town; but again he was dissuaded from the rash action by Stephen Jones, Esq., the peace-maker, who recommended to the British officer, that the first meeting not having been fully attended, another should be called to afford the citizens an opportunity

to suitably express themselves in the matter; but at this second meeting the vote was practically unanimous not to remove the liberty pole; it was resolved to let it remain "until it rots away." These meetings, if we may rely upon traditional reports which have come down to the present generation, were dominated by Jeremiah O'Brien and his brothers. The attitude of Captain Moore with regard to the removal of the liberty pole, and his persistent threats to burn the village, so thoroughly aroused the slumbering indignation of the inhabitants of Machias, including even the more conservative element of the community, that they spontaneously resolved, not only that the cherished emblem of Freedom raised by them should not be disturbed, but that Captain Jones' sloops should not be allowed to return to Boston with lumber. "It is probable"—and we quote these words of an intelligent historian,* as a most striking confirmation of the above statement—"that the permission (to return to Boston with lumber) would have been carried out in good faith had not the Captain of the *Margaretta* unnecessarily provoked a quarrel with the inhabitants." Captain Moore, who it appears began, when too late, to realize that he had overstepped the bounds of discretion, was again restrained from the

* The Hon. George F. Talbot, of Portland, Me., in one of his historical addresses.

execution of his threat by the promise of Stephen Jones, Esq., to have a third meeting of the citizens called for Monday, June 12, 1775, at the same time reminding him of the parting admonition of Admiral Graves to him, on leaving Boston, to avoid provoking hostilities with the people of Machias. Before another public meeting of the citizens of Machias could be held, however, agencies had been set in motion which entirely changed the aspect of things, and rendered such meeting superfluous.

Anticipating that a local conflict might result from the unswerving determination of the people of Machias to defend the liberty pole in the event of its attempted removal by the British, and realizing the disadvantages under which they would labor in such a conflict, swift messengers were therefore secretly despatched to several of the villages to the westward, requesting reinforcements to be hurried forward at once. In the meantime a small party of men had been gathered at East Machias, who, crossing the Machias river on Saturday afternoon, June 10, 1775, at a point about two miles below Machias, and to the southerly side of the stream, sent a delegation up to consult with the O'Briens, whom they recognized as among the leading citizens of the settlement, with reference to a plan of future operations. To Jeremiah O'Brien and his father and brothers, the

idea of seizing the officers of the *Margaretta* and the Jones while at church on the following day, and afterward capturing the British vessel, was suggested. From a gentleman who resided in Machias from the year 1820 to the year 1827, and who heard from the lips of old residents the early history of the village, the author received at first hand the statement that it was at the house of Morris O'Brien that the delegation from the East Machias party met for consultation with the O'Briens. This house stood about half a mile below the "lower bridge" and a little off the Machiasport road down toward the Machias river. The cellar hole and not a few of the foundation stones are still to be seen. A picture of the site of this house may be seen in the Appendix in this volume. From a letter of an old and prominent resident of Machias,* written in the year 1825, when he was 86 years of age, we quote the following reference to the pre-revolutionary history of that frontier town: "Mr. O'Brien, (Morris) tried to persuade Mr. Foster and his party to desist and observed to them that considering our situation at so great a distance from any support, that our supplies must all come by water, that there was not any road by land and that the measure they proposed

* Stephen Jones, Esq., in his "Historic Account of Machias, Me."

must inevitably bring on the destruction of the place; but nothing that they could say had any effect to prevent Foster and his party from attempting to execute the measure they had set upon. Mr. Jeremiah O'Brien and brothers, and Mr. Elliott, (their brother-in-law) finding that they were determined thought they might as well join them as not *and take the lead in the measure.*"* The author is disposed to credit the statements above made as to the reluctance of Morris O'Brien to approve of the plan of siezing Captain Moore and his officers and the Jones while at church, and on the following grounds: 'He was well advanced in life, being at the time about sixty years of age, when, if ever, a man's judgment is ripe; he understood the situation of the settlement—the scarcity of provisions, the difficulty of procuring a fresh supply, and the defenceless condition of the people. He very naturally, therefore, shrank from provoking the destruction of the property which with self-sacrificing labor had been acquired, and the loss of life, and the suffering it would entail upon the inhabitants, women and children, particularly. That he should, under the circumstances, have "taken counsel of his fears," as he seems to have done, is no discredit to this staunch American patriot. But the implication of Mr. Jones' letter of the reluctance of

* The italics are the author's.



"O'BRIEN'S BROOK," MACHIAS, ME.

"O'Brien's Brook," at which the secret meeting of the Machias patriots was held on Sunday morning, June 11, 1775, crosses the road seen in the above picture. The place of meeting was a few feet to the right of the clump of trees in the center of the foreground. Morris O'Brien's house was also to the right of this clump of trees and about 100 rods down toward the Machias river. "O'Brien's Brook" is on the road leading to Machiasport, and about half a mile below the "lower bridge."

Jeremiah O'Brien and his brothers to approve of the plan of seizing the British officers and the Jones at church, the author is positively indisposed to accept; Mr. Jones must, we think, have been misinformed; the O'Brien boys were "cats of another color."

On Sunday morning, June 11, 1775, at about ten o'clock, a secret meeting was held, in accordance with previous arrangement, on the Machiasport road, at a place then known as "O'Brien's Brook," which ran across the road and down through Morris O'Brien's meadow, and thence into the Machias river. When, in the latter part of the month of July, 1900, the author last visited the scene of the above-mentioned meeting, the brook was nearly dry; but earlier and later in the season it is considerably swollen. At the meeting of June 11, 1775, there were present the principal men of Machias and the surrounding villages. The idea of seizing the officers of the *Margaretta* and the Jones while at church, and of afterward capturing the British vessel, and thus avoid, as they hoped, the shedding of blood, was thoroughly discussed. Opinion was at first divided as to the feasibility and expediency of the scheme. Lieutenant Benjamin Foster, as a means of producing unanimity of sentiment, declared that war having already been inaugurated by the mother country with "the first drop of American blood shed at Lexing-

ton, the sooner they took a hand in it the better." Not a few of the party still hesitating about committing themselves to so hazardous an undertaking, Foster boldly stepped across the brook (since known as "the Rubicon") remarking as he did so: "Let all who are willing to strike for Freedom, follow me. Those who are in favor of British tyranny, and think it right to send lumber to Boston wherewith to build barracks for our oppressors, may stay where they are." A majority of those present, influenced by this fervent outburst of patriotism, immediately followed him. "Close at Foster's heels were the O'Briens, six strapping fellows," remarks a local historian.* The entire party soon crossed, and thus made the decision unanimous. The action of these men amounted to a virtual declaration of war against Great Britain by the citizens of Machias and vicinity. "The people of Machias are noted for having declared war against Great Britain and introducing the Revolution on their own responsibility," says the authority last quoted. Of this portion of the thrilling scene at "O'Brien's Brook" another† has facetiously remarked: "Every man soon followed him across the brook—the first instance I presume of ever '*polling the house*' in Machias parliamentary proceedings."

* George W. Drisko, Esq., of Machias.

† John C. Talbot, Esq., of East Machias.

In those early days a morning and an afternoon preaching service on Sunday was the prevailing custom in New England. Before the adjournment of the secret meeting at "O'Brien's Brook," it had been arranged that a portion of the party should attend the afternoon service in the village meeting house, and at a certain signal mutually agreed upon, (the blowing of a shrill whistle) the officers of the *Margaretta* and the Jones should be seized and held as prisoners; and that the remainder of the party should surround the meeting house, and, in the event of the miscarriage of the attempted seizure, should prevent the escape of those selected for capture. John O'Brien, one of the advance party, it is said: "Carried his gun, and hid it under a board. He observed Captain Moore when he entered the church, and took a seat directly behind him, in order to take him prisoner in case of alarm." The afternoon was warm and sultry. The windows of the little meeting house were all open. This modest sanctuary, erected only the previous year, was in an unfinished state, without pews,—rough boards having been temporarily arranged for seats. At one end of the room stood a rude pulpit. The building stood on an elevation overlooking the river. Almost opposite the meeting house, and off White's Point, a point of land running out between the Machias river and Middle river, lay the

Margaretta riding peacefully at anchor. During the church service, conducted by the pastor, Rev. James Lyon—London Atus, the pastor's colored servant, glanced out of one of the open windows and saw, about half a mile above the meeting house, a small party of men with muskets in their hands crossing the river on logs. "They were crossing the river on logs at a point *above the tide waters*," says a local historian.* Concluding that they were British soldiers—of whom he had heard much of late—approaching for the purpose of attacking the village, Atus abruptly jumped to his feet, gave a loud yell, clambered with great haste over the backless seats to a convenient window, and, with a single bound (he was tall and athletic) reached the ground outside. "Pulling himself together," as best he could, he immediately started on a headlong run for the adjacent woods, exclaiming lustily as he went: "Lord a-massy! Lord-a-massy!" As might be inferred, intense excitement and confusion reigned within the meeting house, in consequence of which the service came to an abrupt close. Captain Moore and the officers with him, and Captain Ichabod Jones, were far from slow in realizing the situation, and amid the confusion of the moment all escaped from the

* William Bartlett Smith, in "Historical Sketch of Machias."

place—Captain Moore, in imitation of London Atus, leaping through an open window and hastening with unbecoming speed toward his vessel. Captain Jones outran Atus, reaching the adjacent woods ahead of his dusky contestant, where for several days he was secreted. Stephen Jones, Esq., less fortunate, was taken and kept under guard for a few days. Once Captain Moore and his under officer reached the water's edge, they stepped on board the gig awaiting them, in which they were hastily rowed to the *Margaretta's* side, and without waiting for the usual formalities hustled themselves on board. The vessel's anchors were immediately weighed, and, after discharging a few shots from his swivels over the village, to intimidate the pursuing party, Captain Moore dropped down the river a short distance, the emboldened people following in small boats and canoes, and firing at the retreating "Britishers" with their muskets. A brisk engagement was kept up for several minutes. Again at anchor Captain Moore sent back word to the citizens of Machias that if any harm came to Captain Ichabod Jones or to his sloops he would return and burn the village; as he was determined to protect Jones even at the risk of his own life. With shouts of derision the message of Captain Moore was received by Jeremiah O'Brien and other

village leaders. To a man of his fearless character such a threat was meaningless.

“Rocks have been shaken from their solid base,
But what shall move a firm and dauntless mind?”

The liberty-loving inhabitants of Machias inspired by their heroic leaders became as one man in the determination that Captain Jones' sloops should not return with lumber to Boston, *and that the Margareta should be captured at all hazards.* A selected party of men armed with muskets, at once hastened on foot toward the British vessel at her anchorage just below the village; and from the banks on the southerly side of the river, opened a brisk fire upon her, at the same time demanding her surrender to America. Owing to the height of the river banks the *Margaretta* was unable to sufficiently elevate her guns to effectively return the fire of the attacking party. While broaching to in order to get out of range of the American musketry, the British vessel snapped her main boom, in consequence of which she became seriously crippled. Realizing the growing peril of the situation Captain Moore managed with no little difficulty to drop further down the river to Scott's Point, where he anchored for the night. As night came on the Americans gradually dispersed and returned to their homes. According to one account Captain Moore, on reaching Scott's Point lashed his

vessel to the sides of an American sloop commanded by one Captain Toby, who was impressed on board the British vessel as pilot; the sloop was also robbed of its provisions to replenish the scanty larder of the *Margaretta*.



CHAPTER III.

A PERILOUS UNDERTAKING

Meeting of Joseph Wheaton and Dennis O'Brien on Scott's Wharf—"Let's Go After and Take that Schooner"—The Sloop *Unity* Seized—The Plan of Operations Explained to Jeremiah O'Brien—"My Boys, We Can Do It!"—Arms and Ammunition Hastily Collected—Captain Moore from the Rigging Watches the Movements in Machias—Crew and Armament of the *Unity*—The American Sloop Described—She Sets Sail from the "Western Palos"—Jeremiah O'Brien Elected Commander of the *Unity*—Faint-Hearts Permitted to Return Home—The *Margaretta* Sighted Off Round Island—Captain Moore Tries to Avoid an Engagement.

"How slow the time
To the warm soul, that in the very instant
It forms, would execute a great design."—*Thomson*.

"He holds no parley with unmanly fears,
Where duty bids he confidently steers,
Faces a thousand dangers at her call,
And, trusting to his God, surmounts them all."
—*Cowper*.

EARLY on Monday morning, June 12, 1775, Joseph Wheaton, a young man from New York residing temporarily in Machias,* and Dennis O'Brien, the youngest brother save one of Jeremiah O'Brien, were standing on one of the wharves, probably Scott's, in the village, very naturally discussing the occurrences of the previous day, when Wheaton exclaimed: "Dennis, let us go and take that

schooner." "How will you do it," said Dennis. "We can take Job Harris' sloop, get the people on board her, and take her," was Wheaton's reply. "With all my heart," said Dennis, ready for an adventure so big with promise. The agreement was no sooner made than two other young men who stood near were called and invited to join in the enterprise; to which they readily assented. So entering a small boat moored near the wharf the four rowed out to the *Unity*, lying at anchor in the stream;—boarded, and took possession of her, despite the vehement protestations of the captain, and took her to the wharf. On stepping ashore, these four young men, elated with their success thus far, swung their caps in the air, and gave three rousing cheers. This unusual proceeding brought a crowd to the spot, among whom were Jeremiah O'Brien, and his brothers Gideon and John. In his account of this scene on Scott's wharf a recent writer* remarks concerning Jeremiah O'Brien: "An athletic, gallant man, possessing a good character, and commanding the confidence of those among whom he lived." The project for capturing the *Margaretta* was explained by Wheaton to Jeremiah O'Brien, who, recognizing at once its feasibility, enthusiastically exclaimed, in a tone of voice raised above its ordinary pitch: "My boys, we

* Henry B. Dawson in "The Action Off Machias."

can do it!" That settled the matter for the entire crowd; for what "Jere" O'Brien said "went" in Machias; since, to employ the language of a modern writer* on naval affairs, he was "a village leader." Jeremiah O'Brien at once became the master-spirit of the occasion, and of the hazardous enterprize now on foot. Arms and ammunition and provisions were hurriedly collected and placed on board the sloop *Unity*; and amid the vociferous cheering of the throng, which by this time included nearly the entire population of the settlement—minister, women and children, not excepted—the sloop, (partially loaded with Ichabod Jones' lumber) with a favoring tide, and a breeze from the northwest, set sail, and to quote the choice words of another†—"The good sloop *Unity* left the Western Palos, and steered for the open sea—the pioneer vessel of the new world on the unknown, untried voyage of *Liberty*."

As to the character of the sloop *Unity* we beg to offer the following extract from a recent work on naval affairs:‡ "It should be noted here that these sloops were single-masted vessels * * * They were in form and rig very much like the one-masted vessels employed at the time of this writing (1897) in

* Spear, in his "History of Our Navy."

† Foxhall A. Parker, in "The Capture of the *Margaretta*."

‡ "Spear's History of Our Navy."

carrying brick from the yards on the Hudson river to New York City, but they were not nearly as large as the brick carriers, though they probably stood as high out of the water, if not higher. A sloop-of-war was a very different vessel as will appear further on." As to the armament and crew of the sloop *Unity* the following extract from "The Capture of the *Margaretta*"* will give the reader a satisfactory idea: "So with one impulse they collected and put on board twenty fowling-pieces, with three rounds of powder and ball, thirteen hayforks, a number of axes, a small bag of bread, a few pieces of pork and a barrel of water; the last thing being to mount an old wall-piece that they had found somewhere in the village, on bits of the windlass. The crew consisted of about thirty-five athletic young fellows of the village and vicinity"—selected from the crowd at the wharf whence the *Unity* started. Among the crew of the *Unity* were five younger brothers of Jeremiah O'Brien, and the father of these six sons, then sixty years of age, was only with some difficulty deterred from his purpose to accompany them on this perilous expedition, by the earnest and tender remonstrances of "the boys," who considered themselves a sufficient sacrifice to lay upon their country's altar, without

* By Foxhall A. Parker.

the immolation of their beloved parent. But to the honor of this heroic parent it should be said :

“ The intent and not the deed
Is in our power; and, therefore, who dares greatly
Does greatly.” —*Brown.*

Of the six stalwart sons embarking on that June morning in 1775, in the cause of Freedom, may we not pause to say ?—

“ Such earnest natures are the fiery pith,
The compact nucleus, round which systems grow;
Mass after mass becomes inspired therewith,
And whirls impregnate with the central glow.”

If, as Aristotle says: “ Justice is to give to every man his own ”—then we ought not to neglect here recording, that among the crew of the *Unity* was “ Dick ” Earl, already referred to as the colored servant of Captain Jeremiah O’Brien. Earl had a comfortable home with Captain O’Brien until the decease of the former about the year 1800.

Captain Moore, mounting the rigging of his vessel, had, from his anchorage below the village of Machias, with the aid of his spy-glass, witnessed across the low land intervening, the entire scene at the wharf where the *Unity* lay. He had intently watched the people as they hurried to and from the sloop in their preparations for the contemplated attack on his vessel; and, surmising at length their purpose he promptly weighed anchor, and in his crippled condition from the loss of his main boom,

fell down the river and ran into Holmes' Bay. Here he found an American schooner just in from Norwich, Connecticut, of which Robert Avery was captain. Avery was impressed on board the British vessel as pilot; his provisions were taken for the British crew; the main boom of his vessel was hurriedly transferred to the *Margaretta* and properly adjusted, and Captain Moore then put toward the sea, evidently desiring to avoid a conflict with the *Unity*.

Lieutenant Benjamin Foster had early on the morning of June 12 set out from Machias to East Machias, (his place of residence) where he procured a schooner—the *Falmouth Packet*—gathered a volunteer crew, and in due time started down the East Machias river with the intention of joining Jeremiah O'Brien at the "Rim" to participate in the attack on the *Margaretta*. It was, however, the misfortune of Lieutenant Foster and his crew to get aground on their way down the river to join Jeremiah O'Brien; and he could not, as he soon ascertained, be floated until the mid-day tide. Foster, therefore, promptly despatched a messenger in a little fishing skiff to Jeremiah O'Brien to inform him of his predicament. The testimony of history is to the effect that "the blood of the young men" on the *Unity*, "was now up, and they swore loudly they 'could take the Englishman without the *Falmouth Packet*'; and giving three

rousing cheers, they despatched the boat back to Foster with the news of their spirited determination." The *Falmouth Packet* was floated too late in the day to take any part in the capture of the *Margaretta*.

The *Unity* had set sail from Machias without any duly appointed commander. On sighting the *Margaretta*, therefore, and beginning more fully to realize the seriousness of the business on hand, the necessity of a recognized leader dawned upon the minds of the young men on the American sloop, who, moved by a common impulse had started out that June morning on the perilous task of capturing a British vessel, whose armament consisted of "four (some say ten) six-pounders, twenty swivels—(short and thick guns firing a one-pound ball, and mounted on swivels placed on the vessel's railing), two wall-pieces, forty muskets, forty cutlasses, forty pikes, forty boarding axes, two boxes of hand-grenades, and ten pairs of pistols, with an ample supply of powder and ball. She was manned with two commissioned officers and thirty-eight warrant and petty officers and men—forty in all." Joseph Wheaton, whose quick judgment had recognized in Jeremiah O'Brien the requisite elements of successful leadership, nominated him for that position, and, *without a dissenting voice he was elected*, "in good Ameri-

can fashion," *as commander of the Unity's crew*. Being convinced of the necessity of unanimity of action in the important undertaking before him, Jeremiah O'Brien's first official act, after assuming command of the *Unity* was to give to any who were disinclined to see the undertaking through, the opportunity to go ashore; and three of the crew who had been the most demonstrative on *terra firma* availed themselves of the opportunity, and, entering the small boat placed at their disposal by Captain O'Brien, rowed back to Machias. "Now, my brave fellows, having got rid of those white livered cowards, our first business will be to get along side of the schooner yonder; and the first man who boards her shall be entitled to the palm of honor." Such is the characteristic exclamation attributed to Captain O'Brien, as the three men above-mentioned rowed away from the *Unity's* side, as related by a local historian.*

Before narrating the particulars of the engagement between the *Unity* and the *Margaretta* we beg to offer, what we are certain will be of deep interest to readers, the names of the *Unity's* crew, which we do in the words of a respected historical authority.†

* George W. Drisko, Esq., in "The Liberty Pole, A Tale of Machias."

† William Bartlett Smith, in "Historical Sketch of Machias."

“I have not been able to obtain the names of all the persons who were on board of the sloop (*Unity*) engaged in taking the *Margaretta*. Jeremiah O'Brien, afterwards known as Col. O'Brien, was in command as before stated; Edmund Stevens then of Addison Settlement, was Lieutenant; Gideon O'Brien, John O'Brien, William O'Brien, Richard Earl, a negro who lived with Col. O'Brien, Samuel Watts, Jonathan Knight, who afterwards removed to Calais, a man by the name of Steele from Pleasant River, Josiah Weston, John Merrit, John Barry, Isaac Taft, James Cole, Coolbroth, McNeil, Nathaniel Crediforth, John Hall, John Wheaton, William Fenlason, Joseph Libbee, (not the deacon) Ezekiel Foster, Simon Brown, Joseph Clifford, Bariah Rice, Jonathan Brown, Samuel Whitney, Josiah Libbee, Elias Hoit, and Joseph Getchell, are the names of all the persons I have been able so far to find, who were concerned in this attack. Of these, none are now (1863) living.’ To this list the author begs to add the names of Dennis O'Brien and Joseph O'Brien, both of whom were on board of the *Unity*. “Joseph was a lad of sixteen, and was very anxious to take a hand in the fray, but was forbidden to do so; consequently he secreted himself on board the sloop, and in the engagement proved himself a brave fighter, and later was given the sword (that of Captain Moore sur-



VIEW OF MACHIAS HARBOR, SHOWING HOLMES' BAY AND ROUND ISLAND

It was into Holmes' Bay that the British armed vessel "Margaretta" ran on the early morning of June 12, 1775, to repair her broken boom. It was off Round Island that the "Margaretta" was first sighted by Captain Jeremiah O'Brien on the forenoon of June 12, 1775. A portion of Machiasport is visible in the foreground of the above picture. See opposite page.

rendered to Captain O'Brien) as the baby of the crew."* Mr. Smith gives the name of John Wheaton as among the crew of the *Unity*; there was a Joseph Wheaton on board, and the author presumes it is he Mr. Smith refers to.

The lumber on board the *Unity* was utilized by her crew for breastworks for protection from the enemy's fire. When first sighted off Round Island, in Machias Bay, the *Margaretta* was still headed for the sea, as if desirous of avoiding the American sloop. The reason for this has never, so far as the author is aware, been satisfactorily explained. It may have been in obedience to instructions given Captain Moore by Admiral Graves on the departure of the former from Boston—which were to avoid provoking a quarrel with the Americans. It may have been because there were (as may be inferred from what seems to be a reliable report) on board the *Margaretta* two ladies, relatives of Captain Ichabod Jones, to one of whom Captain Moore was engaged to be married; and they may have been on their way to Halifax where the marriage ceremony was to be performed. If this were the case Captain Moore would very naturally wish to avoid a conflict which

* Extract from a letter to the author from Mrs. Mary O'Brien Brown, of Machias, Me., a descendant of Gideon O'Brien.

might result in the injury of his feminine passengers. Or, again Captain Moore may have endeavored to avoid a conflict with the *Unity* from humane considerations. (Captain Moore) "seems to have been a brave man, intent upon his duties, and who, as he must have believed, in a time of peace, did not consider that it would be actually necessary to turn his heavy guns upon a nearly unarmed party of fellow British subjects."* It could not have been for lack of courage that the British captain sought to avoid the *Unity*,—subsequent events afford no ground whatever for this conclusion.

* Hon. George F. Talbot.



CHAPTER IV.

CAPTURE OF THE MARGARETTA

Captain Moore Unable to Escape—He Hails the *Unity*—Captain O'Brien Demands the *Margaretta's* Surrender—The Two Vessels Come Together and Separate—The Second Time the *Unity* is Lashed to the "Britisher"—A Sharp Fight Ensues—Captain Moore Hurls Hand-Grenades at Captain O'Brien—Order Given to Board—Captain Moore Mortally Wounded—Twenty Men with Pitchforks Board the *Margaretta*—Hand-to-Hand Conflict—British Vessel Surrenders to Captain O'Brien—Captain O'Brien Hauls Down the British Ensign—The *Margaretta* Taken to Machias—Great Rejoicings—Captain O'Brien Congratulated upon His Brilliant Achievement—Captain Moore Dies Lamented—Overwhelming Testimony to the Brilliancy of the Victory, the First of the Revolution.

"It is praiseworthy even to attempt a great action."

—*La Rochefoucauld.*

"Then more fierce

The conflict grew; the din of arms—the yell
Of savage rage—the shriek of agony—
The groan of death, commingled in one sound
Of undistinguish'd horrors; while the sun,
Retiring slow beneath the plain's far verge,
Shed o'er the quiet hills his fading light."—*Southey.*

"A very good piece of work, I assure you."—*Shakespeare.*

THINKING thereby to accelerate the speed of his vessel Captain Moore hurriedly cut away his small boats from the stern and set them adrift in the choppy sea of the bay. The *Unity* being the better sailer was steadily gaining on the British vessel, notwithstanding the latter had the advantage of a full

hour's start in the race. As the American sloop neared the *Margaretta*, Captain Moore, convinced that he would be overtaken, called out from his quarter-deck: "Sloop ahoy! keep off, or I'll fire!" Undaunted by this ominous threat, Captain O'Brien's voice rang out over the intervening waters: "In America's name I demand your surrender!" The threat to fire upon the *Unity* being repeated, one of her officers replied: "Fire away and be damned!" These words were scarcely out of the officer's mouth when, with one of her stern swivels, the *Margaretta* opened fire on her belligerent pursuer, killing one of the *Unity's* crew—McNeil, who was handling the wall-piece—and mortally wounding James Coolbroth. Without a moment's delay a man by the name of Knight assumed the charge of the wall-piece, and, taking deliberate aim, fired, sending a ball straight through the head of the *Margaretta's* helmsman, in consequence of which the British quarter-deck was immediately cleared. "He (Knight) was probably from the back-woods and a moose-hunter, for he was bright enough and skillful enough to pick off the man at the schooner's helm. And that shot drove everybody off the schooner's quarter-deck, so that she was left, as a sailor might say, 'to take charge of herself.'"* Almost at the same instant a volley of mus-

* "Spear's History of Our Navy."

ketry issued from the *Unity's* deck with telling effect upon the astonished enemy. The *Margaretta* being for the moment without a helmsman broached to under the bow of the *Unity*, whose bowsprit tore into the main-sail of her enemy, holding the two vessels together for a few moments. During this time John O'Brien sprang from the bow of the *Unity* to the *Margaretta's* deck, when suddenly the vessels parted, leaving the intrepid boarder alone on the British vessel. Seven of the *Margaretta's* crew promptly discharged their muskets at young O'Brien; but he remained unhurt. They then charged on the "Yankee" intruder with their bayonets; and to save his life he jumped overboard, and, amid a hail of balls from the British vessel swam to the *Unity*, now some thirty yards distant, and was assisted on board. "Brother John, you have won the palm. But man the sweeps, my hearties, and lay us alongside once more, and stand ready to fasten on to him when you reach him." Such were the reassuring words of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, as he shook his brother by the hand, after the latter had reached the *Unity's* deck.

As the *Margaretta* was to be taken by boarding Captain O'Brien now gave orders to have the *Unity* brought alongside the British vessel, and by skillful maneuvering on the part of the *Unity's* helmsman

this was done; and, as the sides of the two vessels touched they were promptly lashed together by some of Captain O'Brien's crew previously appointed for the purpose. Twenty men armed with pitchforks had also been selected by Captain O'Brien to board the British vessel and engage with her crew. Before the *Margaretta's* decks were gained, however, a sharp fight at close range took place. Captain Moore mounting the quarter-deck railing, sword in hand, endeavored to encourage his men, who looked no longer with contempt upon American lumbermen and "haymakers." When the fight seemed to be going against him, Captain Moore, ordering hand-grenades brought to him, began throwing them with his own hands upon the deck of the American sloop. He could not avoid seeing that Captain O'Brien was the master-spirit on board the *Unity*, and, believing that his removal from personal command would demoralize her crew, he now directed his attention to the American commander, and deliberately threw at him several hand-grenades; but O'Brien remained unharmed; in the midst of the carnage of the hour he seemed to bear a charmed life. One of the *Unity's* crew—Samuel Watts—who had presumably witnessed Captain Moore's personal attempt upon the life of Captain O'Brien, deliberately raised his rifle, and after careful aim fired, sending a ball into the

Briton's uniformed breast; either Watts, or another of the American crew, sent a second ball into Moore's breast, when, with sword in hand, and with face to the foe, he fell backward upon his own deck mortally wounded.

“Samuel Watts—a brother of Hannah Weston (or Watts)—a lad eighteen years of age, always claimed to have fired the fatal shot by which Captain Moore fell. Circumstances indicate the truthfulness of his claim * * * Mr. Watts, by whose unerring aim he (Captain Moore) fell, was pensioned by government for his services in this engagement, and subsequent service in aiding the people of Machias to repulse the British at various times. His grave may be found in a private burying ground on the Hall farm, in Jonesboro. His memory deserves a monument * * * The marks—a little mound—incident to a common grave, are not enough.”* The scanty store of ammunition on board the *Unity* was now nearly exhausted; and Captain O'Brien was not slow in seeing, therefore, that the auspicious moment had arrived for boarding the enemy's vessel. Up to this moment the men selected to board had been lying down, wherever shelter could be found, as a protection against the *Margaretta's* fire. Above the din of battle and the groans of the

* “Life of Hannah Weston,” by George W. Drisko, Esq.

wounded on both vessels, Captain O'Brien's manly voice could now be heard giving the anxiously awaited orders: "To your feet, lads! the schooner is our! Follow me! Board!"* Instantly every man was on his feet; the next moment they were dauntlessly clambering over the *Margaretta's* railings, led by their gallant commander. Once the boarders gained the deck of the British vessel, a sharp hand-to-hand engagement ensued. The second officer of the *Margaretta*, upon whom, after Captain Moore's fall, devolved the command, soon became so affrighted because of the impetuous onslaught of the American boarders that he ran below into the cabin, and was seen no more until after the surrender of his vessel. Seeing themselves without a leader the crew of the *Margaretta* speedily realized the futility of further resistance, and, after a few moments of feeble effort to rally, laid down their arms and gave up the fight. " 'I surrender! I surrender!' exclaimed 'in piteous accents,' a voice from the cabin below. 'Who is that?' shouted Captain O'Brien. 'Do you all surrender? If you do, throw down your weapons'. There was a sound of dropping hand-spikes and cutlasses."† The battle had lasted about an hour, terminating at noon.

* Foxhall A. Parker, in "The Capture of the *Margaretta*."

† "The First Capture," by Harry Castlemon.



(Courtesy of the Saalfield Publishing Co., Akron, Ohio.)

**HAND-TO-HAND ENGAGEMENT ON THE DECK OF THE
"MARGARETTA," JUNE 12, 1875.**

The "Unity" lies alongside the "Margaretta," the former being lashed to the latter. See opposite page.

"Then more fierce the conflict grew; the din of arms—the yell of savage rage—the shriek of agony—the groan of death, commingled in one sound of undistinguished horrors."

When the excitement of battle had somewhat subsided and order was once more restored, Captain O'Brien, with his own hands, hauled down the British ensign; and Joseph Wheaton, one of the *Unity's* crew, ran up the shrouds and cut the pennant hal-yards. *Captain Jeremiah O'Brien is, therefore, entitled to the honor of hauling down the first British flag in the War of the American Revolution.* The small boats of the *Margaretta* were taken up; her rigging repaired and her deck put in order preparatory to a return to Machias. With a favoring wind and tide the *Unity* set sail with her valuable prize, reaching the wharf in the village whence she started in the early morning, about sunset of the same day. The crew were welcomed with great rejoicings which were continued long into the night. Captain O'Brien was complimented on all sides for his truly brilliant achievement. During the voyage up the river from the scene of action every attention was paid to Captain Moore and the other wounded of both vessels. A portion of the time the wounded British Captain lay on a red wooden ship-chest; this chest is said to be among the Revolutionary relics now on exhibition in the Porter Memorial Library building, in Machias, Maine. When questioned as to his reasons for holding out so long in the naval engagement already described, Captain Moore is re-

ported to have replied: "I fought, not for my life, but for honor." On reaching Machias Moore was carried to the house of his friend, Stephen Jones, Esq., in the village, where he was tenderly cared for; but on the following day, Tuesday, June 13, he died, deeply lamented by friend and foe for his manly qualities. "It is probable that he (Moore) was buried in Machias."*

As to the casualties of the naval engagement between the *Unity* and the *Margaretta* there is considerable difference of opinion. From a local historian† we quote the following statement as to losses: "Of our adventurous band one man was killed, by the name of McNiel, leaving a wife and family. James Coolbroth was mortally wounded and soon after died. Three other men were also badly wounded, namely,—John Berry, who afterward lived at Hadley's Lake, and received a pension of \$8 per month during his life. A ball entered his mouth and came out behind his ear. He used to say that the man who shot him, fell as soon as he did. Two other men, who were wounded, were Isaac Taft and James Cole, who were laid up for some time under the care of a surgeon. On board the *Margaretta* there were four persons killed, beside Captain Moore,

* George W. Drisko, Esq., "The Life Hannah Weston."

† William Bartlett Smith, in "Historical Sketch of Machias."

who was mortally wounded. One of them was Captain Avery who was taken out of the coasting schooner in Holmes' Bay by Moore to act as Pilot, as before mentioned. He sat on deck, it is said, completely stupified during the action, till he was shot. The other three were sailors or marines." "After a short contest the *Margaretta* was taken with a loss of four killed and eight or nine wounded on the part of the Americans, and of about ten killed and ten wounded on the part of the British. * * * *

The account above of the killed and wounded on board the *Margaretta* was taken from a letter of Captain Joseph Wheaton, recently of Washington, D. C., who was at the time of the engagement one of the American crew. The letter was written a few years ago to Captain John O'Brien. The latter, although present in the action, did not recollect distinctly the number, but he placed full confidence in Mr. Wheaton's statements."* "Of the British besides the Captain, five were killed or mortally wounded, and ten disabled, while of the Americans, the only men slain were McNeil and James Coolbroth; Isaac Taft and James Cole were laid up for some time under the care of a surgeon, and John Berry, who afterwards lived at Hadley's Lake."† "In all

* Maine Historical Society Collections, Vol. II, Page 242, Willis Reference Room, Public Library, Portland, Me.

† Foxhall A. Parker, in the "Capture of the *Margaretta*."

20 were killed and wounded, showing that it was a desperate conflict when once the two crews got within range of each other, man for man; for 20 was more than 1-4 of all engaged. On the *Margaretta* the captors found two wall-pieces, 40 cutlasses, 40 long axes, two boxes of hand-grenades, 40 muskets, 20 pistols, and an ample supply of powder and shot.'”*

We have referred to the capture of the *Margaretta* by Captain Jeremiah O'Brien as a “brilliant achievement,” and in this opinion we are by no means alone. To quote the numerous endorsements of this view of the affair would necessitate the use of an undue proportion of space in this volume, hence we present but a few of them: “Had the result (of the War of the Revolution) been different, posterity would have classed Colonel Barrett, and Jeremiah O'Brien and George Washington with the Watt Tylers, and Thomas Muncers and Oliver Cromwells of European history, and consigned their names and their patriotic deeds, with those of their illustrious predecessors, blackened with all that malignant enmity could invent, to everlasting ridicule and contempt.”† “Not only was the fight between the *Margaretta's* crew and the haymaker's crew interesting in itself; it was followed by consequences of the most

* “Spear's History of Our Navy.”

† Henry B. Dawson, in “The Action off Machias.”

important nature in connection with *the establishment of the American navy.*"* "A more daring feat of heroism can scarcely be found on the records of naval warfare anywhere; and, considering how unequally matched the contestants were, the victory can only be attributed to the headlong dash and recklessness of the resolute spirits, whose courage seemed more than an equivalent for arms and discipline."† "The victory was no mean achievement for the colonists. She (the *Margaretta*) was vastly the superior, both in metal and in the strength of her crew. That the Americans had so quickly (captured the British vessel) spoke volumes for their pluck and endurance."‡ "Our surprise and admiration pass alternately from the rash audacity of the project to the impetuous bravery of its accomplishment. *Surely there is nothing like this in our early or recent history.*"§ "In enumerating the consequences of the capture of the *Margaretta* to the American colonists it should not be forgotten that 'it kept for freedom the whole country east of the Penobscot.'

* * * * *

A careful authority has stated to the Massachusetts Historical Society that in the end the boundary line

* "Spear's History of Our Navy."

† Hon. George F. Talbot, in "Machias in the Revolution."

‡ W. J. Abbott, in "Naval History of the United States."

§ Hon. George F. Talbot, Portland, Me.

was determined rather by possession than by the compass or by the treaty of peace.”* “The capture of the *Margaretta* was the Lexington of the Sea—since like that land engagement, it was a rising of the people against a regular force, was characterized by a long chase, a bloody struggle and a triumph. It was also the first blow struck on the water, after the war of the American Revolution had actually commenced.”† “Taking all the circumstances of the occasion into view—especially the remote position of our town from any place where assistance could be readily obtained—this event may be considered as *one of the most bold, energetic, and extraordinary occurrences of the times.*”‡

“Rude were the arms of strife
 In combat wielded then—
 But the harvest scythe—the woodman's axe,
 Were meet for those stern men.
 Tho' frail, the bark they sailed
 To chase a powerful foe,
 'God and the right' was all that chose,
 Those manly souls to know.

Here let a few still keep
 On bright historic page,
 The record of that noble deed
 For every coming age,
 To teach our country's foes,
 That where oppressions fall,
 Are hearts in mailed armor clad,
 To leap at Freedom's call.”

* M. E. C. Smith, in “Machias in the Revolution and Afterward.”

† J. Fennimore Cooper, in “The History of the Navy of the United States.”

‡ William Bartlett Smith, in “Historical Sketch of Machias.”

CHAPTER V.

WAR IN EARNEST

Warlike Preparations—Committee of Safety Chosen at Machias—Captain Jeremiah O'Brien a Member of the Committee—Messenger Sent to the Provincial Congress—Communication from the Machias Committee of Safety to the Provincial Congress—Resolution of Thanks to Captain Jeremiah O'Brien—*Margaretta's* Prisoners Taken to Watertown—British Prizes Condemned—Prize Money Distributed—Fate of the *Margaretta*.

“Force is at best
A fearful thing e'en in a righteous cause;
God only helps when man can help no more.”
—*Schiller*.

“Thy spirit, Independence, let me share,
Lord of the lion heart and eagle eye:
Thy steps I'll follow with my bosom bare,
Nor heed the storm that howls along the sky.”
—*Tobias Smollett*.

“Rest not! life is sweeping by:
Go and dare before you die.
Something mighty and sublime
Leave behind to conquer time.”—*Goethe*.

THE citizens of Machias, fully realizing that war was upon them, at once appointed a Committee of Safety and Correspondence, of which Captain Jeremiah O'Brien was made a member. This Committee “were intrusted with the defence of the town, and the management of such of its affairs, as should seem from time to time necessary. On occasions of extra-

ordinary interest they had power to call a meeting of the inhabitants, to whom the Committee reported their doings, and awaited their instructions. This settlement was placed under a sort of martial law, from this time to the close of the Revolution—the Committee of Safety acting as universal supervisors over its pecuniary, military and civil departments.” One of the first official acts of the Machias Committee of Safety after their appointment was to send John O'Brien and Lieutenant Benjamin Foster to Watertown, where the Provincial Congress of the Massachusetts Colony was then in session, with a communication informing that body of the capture of the *Margaretta*, and of the state of affairs in general in Machias. The Committee also asked the protection of the Provincial Congress to the feeble settlements to the eastward.

“A letter from the Committee of Machias was read, (at a meeting on Sunday afternoon, June 25, 1775) respecting the capture of a king's cutter, and committed to the committee which was yesterday appointed to consider a letter on the same object of Col. Otis. (Foot Note [E]) The letter of the committee of Machias contains the relation of a bold exploit. It was dated June 14, 1775.*

* From the “Journals of Each Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, 1774-5.”



VIEW OF EAST MACHIAS, ME.
East Machias lies about four miles east of Machias, the County Seat. See page 38.

'TO THE HONORABLE CONGRESS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS BAY:

Gentlemen :—We, the faithful and distressed inhabitants of Machias, beg leave once more, in the most respectful manner, to approach your presence and spread before you a just and full representation of our very critical situation. On the 2d instant Capt. Ichabod Jones arrived in this river with two sloops, accompanied with one of the King's tenders. On the 3d instant a paper was handed about for the people to sign as a prerequisite to their obtaining any provisions, of which we were in great want. The contents of this paper required the signers to indulge Capt. Jones in carrying lumber to Boston & to protect him and his property at all events; but, unhappily for him if not for us, it soon expired, after producing effects directly contrary in their nature to those intended. The next effort in order to carry those favorite points was to call a meeting, which was accordingly done. On the 6th the people generally assembled at the place appointed, and seemed so averse to the measures proposed that Capt. Jones privately went to the tender & caused her to move up so near the town that her guns would reach the houses, & put springs upon her cables. The people, however, not knowing what was done, and considering themselves nearly as prisoners of war in the

hands of the common enemy—which is our only plea for suffering Capt. Jones to carry any lumber to Boston since your Honors conceived it improper—passed a vote that Capt. Jones might proceed in his business as usual without molestation, that they would purchase the provision he brought into the place and pay him according to contract. After obtaining this vote, Capt. Jones immediately ordered his vessels to the wharf, and distributed his provisions among those only who voted in favor of his carrying lumber to Boston. This gave such offense to the aggrieved party that they determined to take Capt. Jones if possible & put a final stop to his supplying the King's troops with anything. Accordingly, they secretly invited the people of Mispeeka & Pleasant River to join them. Accordingly, a number of them came, &, having joined our people in the woods near the settlement on the 11th, they all agreed to take Capt. Jones and Stephen Jones, Esq., in the place of worship, which they attempted, but Captain Jones made his escape to the woods, and does not yet appear. Stephen Jones, Esq., only was taken, and remains as yet under guard. The captain & lieutenant of the tender were also in the meeting-house, & fled to their vessel, hoisted their flag, and sent a message on shore to this effect: That he had express orders to protect Capt. Jones; that he was determined

to do his duty whilst he had life; & that if the people presumed to stop Capt. Jones' vessels, he would burn the town. Upon this, a party of our men went directly to stripping the sloop that lay at the wharf, and another party went off to take possession of the other sloop, which lay below, and brought her up nigh a wharf, and anchored her in the stream. The tender did not fire, but weighed her anchors as privately as possible, and in the dusk of the evening fell down & came to within musket-shot of the sloop, which obliged our people to slip their cable & run the sloop aground. In the meantime, a considerable number of our people went down in boats and canoes, lined the shore directly opposite to the tender, and, having demanded her surrender to America, received for an answer, 'Fire and be damned.' They immediately fired in upon her, which she returned, and a smart engagement ensued. The tender at last slipped her cable, and fell down to a small sloop commanded by Capt. Toby, and lashed herself to her for the remainder of the night. In the morning of the 12th they took Capt. Toby out of his vessel for a pilot, & made all the sail they could to get off, as the wind and tide favored; but, having carried away her main boom, and meeting with a sloop from the Bay of Fundy, they came to, robbed the sloop of her boom & gaff, took almost all her

provisions, together with Mr. Robert Avery, of Norwich, in Connecticut, and proceeded on her voyage. Our people, seeing her go off in the morning, determined to follow her. About forty men, armed with guns, swords, axes & pitchforks, went in Capt. Jones' sloop under the command of Capt Jeremiah O'Brien; about twenty, armed in the same manner & under command of Capt. Benjamin Foster, went in a small schooner. During the chase our people built them breastworks of pine boards and anything they could find in the vessels that would screen them from the enemy's fire. The tender, upon the first appearance of our people, cut her boats from the stern & made all the sail she could; but, being a very dull sailer, they soon came up with her, and a most obstinate engagement ensued, both sides being determined to conquer or die; but the tender was obliged to yield. Her captain was wounded in the breast with two balls, of which wounds he died next morning. Poor Mr. Avery was killed, and one of the mariners, and five wounded. Only one of our men was killed, and six were wounded, one of whom is since dead of his wounds. The battle was fought at the entrance of our harbor, & lasted for near the space of one hour. We have in our possession four double-fortified three-pounders & fourteen swivels and a number of small arms, which we took with the



"WHITE'S POINT," MACHIAS, ME.

This point runs out between the Machias river and Middle river at the lower part of the northern village of Machias. It was off this point that the British armed schooner "Margaretta" anchored during her stay at Machias in June, 1775.

At this point the inhabitants threw up earthworks in the year 1777 to aid them in their resistance to the British naval forces sent against the village by Admiral Graves from Port Royal (now Annapolis) N. S. See page 43.

tender, besides a very small quantity of ammunition, &c. Thus we have given your Honors as particular an account of this affair as possible. We now apply to you for advice and for a supply of ammunition & provisions, the latter of which we have petitioned your Honors for already, which if we could be fully supplied with, we doubt not but with the blessing of Heaven we should be prepared to defend ourselves. We propose to convey the prisoners to Pownalborough Goal* as soon as possible, there to await your orders. We are, with deference, your Honors' most obedient humble servants.

By order of the Committee,

JAMES LYON, Chairman.

Machias, June 14th, 1775.

GEORGE STILLMAN, Clerk.'

The committee to consider the letter from Machias reported; the report was accepted, and is as follows:

'RESOLUTION OF THANKS, PASSED MONDAY, THE
26TH OF JUNE, 1775.

Resolved, That the thanks of this Congress be and hereby are given to Captain Jeremiah O'Brien and Captain Benjamin Foster, and the other brave

* The Pownalborough of Revolutionary days was what is now Wiscasset, Me., situated on the sea coast, and about a hundred and twenty-five miles nearly southwest from Machias.

men under their command, for their courage and good conduct in taking one of the Tenders belonging to our enemies, and two sloops belonging to Ichabod Jones, and for preventing the ministerial troops being supplied with lumber; and that the said Tender, sloops, their appurtenances and cargoes remain in the hands of the said Captains O'Brien and Foster and the men under their command, for them to use and improve, as they shall think most for their and the public's advantage until the further order of this or of some future Congress or House of Representatives; and that the committee of safety for the western parish of Pownalborough, be ordered to convey the prisoners taken by the said O'Brien and Foster, from the Pownalborough jail to the committee of safety or correspondence, for the town of Brunswick; and the committee for Brunswick to convey them to some committee in the County of York, and so to be conveyed from county to county till they arrive at this Congress."

Lieutenant Ely Styles, an officer of the Continental army, accompanied the prisoners captured on board the *Margaretta*, from Machias to Watertown. The names of these prisoners, as copied from a public document,* were as follows: "Thomas Skinner, William Nurse, John Burrows, Nicholas Durham,

* "Journals of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts."

Peter Larcher, Thomas Crispo, Joseph Temple, William Bishop and John Padra," It was ordered by the Provincial Congress that they "be all sent under a proper guard to the common jail in the county of Worcester; and the jailer is hereby directed to receive them therein, and provide for them, and detain them till the further order of this Congress or House of Representatives of this colony."

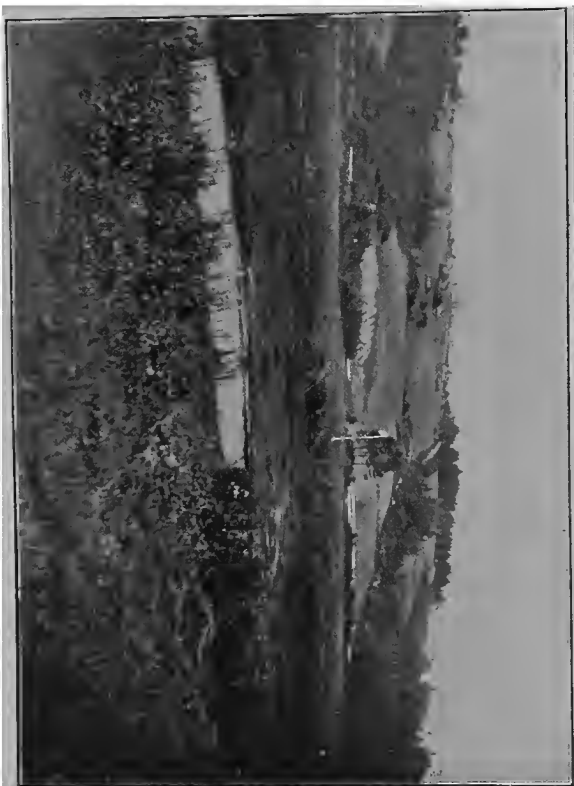
The *Margaretta*, the *Unity* and the *Polly*, the two latter sloops the former property of Captain Ichabod Jones, of Boston, were regularly adjudicated upon and condemned as lawful prizes and the prize money distributed amongst the captors. "Though the capture of the *Margaretta* was a private affair, accounts were kept of the expenses incurred, and also of the other prizes. * * * * * The bills were allowed by the Provincial Congress to stand against the money and supplies which the town, in common with other eastern towns, had been obliged to receive in those hard years. The share thus furnished Machias, nearly twelve hundred pounds, was (not in common with the other towns) all scrupulously paid back when peace came."*

As it is a matter of no little interest what became of the captured British vessel, we present the

* M. E. C. Smith, in "Machias in the Revolution and Afterward."

following account of her subsequent history: "The *Margaretta* was taken up to Machias June 12, 1775. On the 13th of June, 1775, Captain Joseph Getchell and others took the *Margaretta* up Middle river as far as Thatch Island. Next day, Wednesday, June 14, they took her up to the head of the tide and run her on the flats on the North side of the Middle river, at a point above where the bridge now is.* They cut away the masts, cast out the ballast, and felled trees on the hull, the better to cover her resting place, in case the enemy should come to search for her. In July, 1777, the *Margaretta* was refitted and taken in charge by Captain Getchell and others, intending to go to Castine, expecting to encounter a British war vessel known to be coasting on the shore of Maine. When near Castine Captain Getchell learned that three British men of war were in Castine harbor or near vicinity, and concluded to return to Machias river, and hauled his vessel into Butterfield's wharf at Machiasport. Late in 1776 or early in 1777, Captain George Benner, of Machias, took command of the *Margaretta* and followed coasting along shore between Machias and Falmonth, visiting settlements, trading in boards, lumber and provisions. This was followed more or less for four years. On a return

* See picture showing the place where the *Margaretta* was "beached."



SPOT WHERE THE MARGARETTA WAS "BEACHED"

The spot where the captured British armed vessel "Margaretta" was "beached" at high tide on the night of June 12 and morning of June 13, 1775, is indicated in the above picture by a flag pole and flag. To prevent the British from recovering the vessel her masts were "cut away", and she was covered by felled trees and by boughs. The party who took the "Margaretta" up the Middle river on the night of June 12, seems to have been in command of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien. See opposite page.

trip in 1780 or 1781, the *Margaretta* got ashore in Beale's Island, in Jonesport, or onto the rocks in that vicinity and was abandoned. Subsequently she was taken to Lamson's wharf in Jonesport. 'She rotted at deacon Lamson's wharf,' says one,—'my father who saw her many times told me so.'* A later account of the fate of the *Margaretta* represents that in the autumn of the year 1776, Captain John O'Brien floated, refitted, equipped and used her as a privateer, changing her name to the "Hare;" and, being chased by a British man-of-war, he ran her onto the flats at Sawyer's Cove, near Jonesport, on the Maine coast. Captain O'Brien and his crew of ten men escaped into the surrounding country. A boat load of men who were sent by the British commander to inspect the "Hare," set fire to her, and she burned to the water's edge.

The news of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien's brilliant naval victory spread rapidly through the land, and everywhere the colonists were stirred with the ambition to emulate his splendid achievement. "This victory caused great rejoicings throughout the country."†

* George W. Drisko, Esq., in "The Machias Union," of June 22, 1875.

† Willis J. Abbott, in "Naval History of the United States."

CHAPTER VI

ANOTHER BRILLIANT NAVAL VICTORY

The *Unity* Fitted Out as an American Cruiser—Named *Machias Liberty* by Captain Jeremiah O'Brien—He starts Out on a Cruise—Captures Two British Vessels—Sent to Cambridge and Watertown—News of Captain O'Brien's Captures Received with Great Enthusiasm—He Dines with Washington at Cambridge—Presents Petitions to the Provincial Congress—Bills of Expenses for Conveying Prisoners Presented—Captain O'Brien Appointed Captain of the Marine—Appointed Commander of the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent*—Money, Ammunition and Provisions Voted to Captain O'Brien.

"The fame that a man wins himself is best! * * *
So man's true fame must strike from his own deeds."
—*Middletown.*

"Honor and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part; there all the honor lies."
—*Pope*

"The love of praise, how'er concealed by art,
Reigns, more or less, and glows in ev'ry heart;
The proud to gain it toils endure,
The modest shun it but make it sure."—*Young.*

AT once the Machias Committee of Safety began to devise means for the defense of the place, which, because of its proximity to the loyal British provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia was peculiarly liable to attack. By order of the committee above-mentioned the sloop *Unity* was fitted out as a cruiser, the armament of the captured *Margaretta* was transferred to her, and her name

changed (by Captain O'Brien probably) to the *Machias Liberty*.* Captain O'Brien was placed in command of the new cruiser by the Machias Committee of Safety. *This was, without question, the first American armed cruiser employed in connection with the War of the Revolution.*

About the 23rd of June, 1775, Captain O'Brien, acting upon instructions received from the Machias Committee of Safety set sail in the *Machias Liberty* for the Bay of Fundy, in which he cruised in search of the British armed schooner *Diligent* and her tender, the *Tapnaquish*. After an absence of about three weeks Captain O'Brien returned to Machias. It was after his return to Machias from his first cruise in the *Machias Liberty* that the tories of the village gave the first overt exhibition of their malice toward Captain O'Brien, by composing and opportunely singing, a song, in which it was said he had run into some bay on the Maine coast and anchored, (Fox's or Foss' Bay, as nearly as can now be ascertained) for the purpose, as they alleged, of avoiding an engagement with the British vessels he had been sent out to capture, but which, for some reason, he did not even sight during his cruise. Captain O'Brien subsequently denied in the most emphatic manner

* The fact that the *Margaretta* was "a very dull sailer" explains why she was not used by Captain O'Brien as an American cruiser, instead of the *Unity*.

having ever been in the bay in question. About the 10th of July, 1775, (owing to the lack of reliable data we can only give in this connection, approximate dates) word came to Machias that the British vessels *Diligent* and *Tapnaquish* were near Buck's Harbor, a small village at the entrance of Machias Bay,* where, as was subsequently ascertained, the captain of the former had gone on shore for the purpose, as he alleged, of making enquiries concerning the reported capture of the *Margaretta*. This officer was held by the small American garrison at Buck's Harbor,† and against his earnest protestations was sent to Machias as a prisoner. Acting upon instructions from the Machias Committee of Safety, Captain Jeremiah O'Brien in the *Machias Liberty*, and Captain Benjamin Foster in a schooner from East Machias, proceeded, as soon as wind and tide were favorable, down the river, for the purpose of capturing the British vessel and her tender. The *Diligent* carrying eight or ten guns, and a crew of about fifty men, surrendered to Captain O'Brien; and the *Tapnaquish*

* "Machias Bay is about two leagues in breadth at its mouth, and seven miles in length. At its northwest corner it receives the waters of the East and West Machias rivers, three miles below where they form in junction, and two miles below where they pass the narrows." "Williamson's History of Maine," Vol. I.

† "Buck's Harbor, though small, being easy of access from the sea. It is a cove on the east side of the point which is the western limit of Machias Bay. The entrance to Buck's Harbor is but narrow."—*Ibid.*



BUCK'S HARBOR, MAINE

Buck's Harbor is a small village at the western entrance to Machias Bay. It was just outside the narrow entrance to Buck's Harbor that Captain Jeremiah O'Brien and Benjamin Foster captured the British armed cruiser "Diligent" and her tender the "Tapnagush" on July 12, 1775. See opposite page.

carrying sixteen swivels, and a crew of twenty men surrendered to Captain Foster. This occurred on Tuesday, the 12th of July, 1775. The captured British vessels and their crews were brought the same day in triumph to Machias. Anticipating bloodshed, as a result of the attempted capture of the British vessels, Morris O'Brien, the father of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, had started in a small boat down the river toward the scene of action, with a surgeon; he met the two American commanders, however, coming up the river with their prizes.

It is stated by some writers that the *Diligent* and the *Tapnaquish* were sent out from Halifax, Nova Scotia, by the British naval authorities for the purpose of making a survey of the coast of the Bay of Fundy. Other writers, however, give a different version of the matter, as will be seen from the quotations following: * * * * * "Mr. O'Brien (Captain Jeremiah) made an attack on two small English cruisers that were said to have been sent out from Halifax expressly to capture him."* "The news of the capture of the *Margaretta* caused some excitement in Nova Scotia, and two schooners were fitted out from Halifax, for the purpose of retaking her."† "Straightway the efforts of the Brit-

* J. Fennimore Cooper, in "The History of the Navy of the United States of America."

† Captain John O'Brien.

ish naval authorities to punish him (Captain O'Brien) for his assault upon the *Margaretta*, gave him the opportunity to acquire both. (more prizes and glory) Two schooners, the *Diligent* and the *Tapanagouche* were sent from Halifax to bring the obstreperous Irish Yankee in for trial.* "The news of this fight (between the *Unity* and the *Margaretta*) greatly enraged British naval officials, and * * * they sent two armed sloops, the *Diligence* and the *Tapanagouche*, or *Tapnaquish*, from Halifax to punish the audacious Yankees.† Concerning the manner in which the *Diligent* and the *Tapnaquish* were captured by Captains O'Brien and Foster we present the following statements: "But Captain O'Brien was a sailorman as well as a haymaker. By skilfully handling his sloop he separated the cruisers, and then captured them one at a time by the bold dash that had succeeded in the assault on the *Margaretta*."‡ "O'Brien and Foster * * * ordered their colors to be struck. Lieutenant Spry, then in command, Knight being absent, seeing so powerful force around him, surrendered, and the vessels and prisoners were brought up to Machias."§

* "Spear's History of Our Navy."

† Edgar S. Maclay, in "History of American Privateers."

‡ "Spear's History of Our Navy."

§ William Bartlett Smith, in "Historical Sketch of Machias."

“Both the English vessels surrendered at the first attempt at boarding them, and without making any resistance. The *Diligence* surrendered to O'Brien, *Tapnaquish* to Foster.”* “By separating these vessels, he (Captain O'Brien) took them both, with little resistance.”† “They (the British vessels) were wholly unprepared for fighting, therefore to attempt it would be madness, and the vessels were taken possession of without opposition and brought up to headquarters.”‡ “They met July 12, 1775, * * * * * and by attacking them separately the Americans took both.”

Joseph Wheaton, in his now famous letter to Gideon O'Brien, written from Washington, D. C., in the year 1818, says, in connection with his mention of the capture of the *Diligent* and *Tapnaquish* that “he (Captain Jeremiah O'Brien) took the *Diligence* and *Tapnagouche* with which two vessels sailed to St. John and took the garrison, and such English merchant vessels that were in port.” Wheaton, it may be remarked was doubtless in Machias at the time the two British vessels above-mentioned were captured;

* Captain John O'Brien.

† J. Fennimore Cooper, in “The History of the Navy of the United States of America.”

‡ Stephen Jones, Esq., in “Historical Account of Machias, Me.”

he must have been aware of Captain O'Brien's movements, and it is scarcely possible he would have made such a statement as that just quoted, had there not been a good basis for it. Accepting Mr. Wheaton's statement, it seems that after the capture of the *Diligent* and *Tapnaquish*, Captain O'Brien made a cruise to St. John, New Brunswick, where he compelled the surrender of the British garrison there, and afterward captured several British merchant vessels lying in port there.

About the middle of July, 1775, Captains Jeremiah O'Brien and Benjamin Foster were sent by the Machias Committee of Safety to Headquarters at Cambridge to officially report the capture of the *Diligent* and the *Tapnaquish*. The prisoners captured with these two vessels were also taken by the above named officers to headquarters at Cambridge and delivered to Washington. The journey was made by water in small sailing vessels to Falmouth, (now Portland) which occupied about a week. After a brief stay in Falmouth Captains O'Brien and Foster began their march overland (probably to avoid the risk of recapture by the British armed vessels cruising along the coast) to Cambridge—which occupied about ten days more. They reached headquarters at Cambridge about the middle of August, and at once reported to Washington, who had but recently assum-

ed the command of the Continental army. It was probably during this visit to Cambridge that Captain O'Brien by invitation, dined for the first time with Washington; he subsequently dined with him several times. From Cambridge O'Brien and Foster proceeded to Watertown where the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts was then in session, to make a report of the recent captures to that body. The news of the capture of the *Diligent* and the *Tapnaquish* was received by the Provincial Congress with great enthusiasm, and a resolution of thanks passed on behalf of Captains O'Brien and Foster and the men engaged in the enterprise. As a fitting recognition of his invaluable services Jeremiah O'Brien was also appointed a Captain of the Marine of the Massachusetts Colony—a peculiarly significant honor. As to the effect of Captain O'Brien's brilliant victories upon the colonists, and upon the British naval authorities, the reader may infer from the quotations following: "The gallantry and good conduct of Mr. O'Brien were so admired, that he was immediately appointed a captain of the Marine in the Colony, and sent out with his two last prizes, with orders to intercept vessels bringing supplies to the royal forces. Many adventures, or enterprises, more or less resembling these of Captain O'Brien, took place on different parts of the coast, though none of

so brilliant and successful a character. By way of retaliation, and in view to intimidate, the English Commander-in-Chief, Admiral Graves, sent a force under the orders of Captain Mowatt, to destroy the town of Falmouth, and four hundred buildings were burned.* “For this truly brilliant affair O’Brien was made a Captain in the Massachusetts State Marine, and with his two prizes * * * * he went out to cruise after British transports.”† “The news of this victory was received with vast enthusiasm; and the Legislature conferred upon him the rank of Captain, and ordered him out on another cruise.”‡ “The two brave commanders proceeded to the Headquarters of the American army, then at Cambridge, to carry intelligence of the victory, and were there received with shouts of applause. Congress afterwards voted them public thanks for their bravery and good conduct.”§ “Such brave deeds as these did not go unrewarded in those days. Captain O’Brien received a commission from the Colony, and, with the three vessels well fitted he was sent once more to sea to cruise for vessels bringing supplies to

* J. Fennimore Cooper, “The History of the United States of America.”

† Edgar S. Maclay, in “History of American Privateers.”

‡ Willis J. Abbott, in “Naval History of the United States.”

§ Address of John C. Talbot, Esq.

the British troops."* "The exploits of Captain O'Brien stirred seamen from Maine to the Carolinas."†

It was probably during Captain O'Brien's visit to Watertown just alluded to that the following petitions and bills of expenses were personally presented by him to the Provincial Congress of the Massachusetts Colony. These documents were probably prepared before Captain O'Brien's departure from Machias. We present them as indicative of his deep interest in the welfare of Machias, and as illustrative also of the confidence reposed in him by his fellow-townsmen.

“TO THE HONORABLE COUNCIL AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ASSEMBLED AT WATERTOWN THE 19th DAY JULY‡, A. D., 1775:

The petition of the subscribers in behalf of inhabitants of Machias in the County of Lincoln and Province of Massachusetts Bay—Humbly sheweth, that your petitioners in the present unhappy times have been at great expense in guarding the coast at Machias, by which means the inhabitants have done but very little else

* "Spear's History of Our Navy."

† Willis J. Abbott, in "Naval History of the United States."

‡ The date above given may have reference to the time the Provincial Congress began its session at Watertown, the first session of the Congress having been held at Concord, from whence they had fled on the reported approach of the British troops from Boston.

for two months past, which leaves us in a very distressed situation, unable to defend ourselves, or the common cause for which our country in general is contending. However, we beg leave to hold ourselves ready and willing to exert ourselves still further, by virtue of such encouragement as your Honors shall think proper. We, therefore, pray your honors would please to allow us the privilege of raising a company of men amongst ourselves on the expense of the Province, by which means we humbly conceive we should be enabled to guard our own port by continuing the young men in the place, which at present are wholly out of employ, and contribute in some measure to the necessity of the poor inhabitants. The company so raised to be under such restriction and regulation as your Honors shall think fit. We would also beg leave to represent to your Honors that we have not a sufficiency of powder and ball to make any considerable defence in case of an invasion. We humbly pray your Honors would supply us with two hundred weight of powder, and balls in proportion. Your Honors are doubtless sensible of the great cost and charge your petitioners must necessarily be at in the conveyance of a number of prisoners from Machias to Watertown, near three hundred and fifty miles distant, the particular accounts of which we beg leave to lay before your Honorable Committee.

We, therefore, pray your Honors would please to grant such a sum of money to be paid unto your petitioners as will enable us to defray all such charges as shall be found right and just; and your petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray.

JEREMIAH OBRIEN,
BENJA. FOSTER.

TO THE HONORABLE COUNCIL AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COLONY OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY ASSEMBLED AT WATERTOWN THE 19th DAY OF JULY, A. D. 1775:

The petition of Benjamin Foster and Jeremiah O'Brien in behalf of the inhabitants of Machias humbly sheweth. That whereas your petitioners have been at great expense in fixing a privateer for the defence of the place, and its situation is such that it may be easily blocked up by a small vessel and stop all communication, we intreat with submission that there may be commissions for the officers, and some men stationed on board of her to be ready in any emergency to take the troops on board that are stationed there, when thought proper by our Committee; other way we humbly conceive that if said privateer shall engage an armed vessel and be taken (which we are determined by divine assistance never to be) we shall be deemed and treated as pirates. We would also inform your Honors that there is an estate

belonging to Ichabod Jones, formerly of Boston, in the hands of Stephen Jones of Machias; your petitioners humbly beg that your Honors would take it into consideration and order said estate to be taken care of by the Committee of Safety at Machias, or some proper person that your Honors shall point out, and that the income of said estate may defray some of the charges that have arisen by reason of said Jones being an enemy to his country. We would inform your Honors that in taking the first Tender one of the men that was killed has left a poor helpless widow and six small children entirely destitute of the necessaries of life; and a number of wounded men who have lost their whole summer, by being wounded, who will stand in great need of some relief. If your Honors after consideration would be pleased to give directions so that the profits of said estate may be applied for the benefit of those that have met with these misfortunes, and your petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray.

BENJA. FOSTER,
JEREMIAH O'BRIEN.

In Council Augt. 18, 1775.

Read and sent down

SAML. ADAMS, SECRY."

The bills of expenses for the conveyance of the prisoners of war captured on board the *Diligent* and

Tapnasquish, on July 12, 1775, from Machias to Watertown, by Captains Jeremiah O'Brien and Benjamin Foster, presented to the Provincial Congress by the former will, it is thought, be of no little interest to readers. It is as follows:

“ To wounded men, prisoners and attendance two months, and still remain under the Doctor's hands, Knight's computation,	£100,0,0
To expenses for 17 prisoners to Falmouth by water, 14 days,	17,0,0
To ditto 18 men for guards,	18,0,0
To wages for 18 men 14 days,	33,12,0
To 2 men to guard 11 prisoners from Machias to Watertown, 3 weeks march time and expense,	12,12,0
To expenses on the prisoners before we took up on the credit of the Province by land,	3,18,0
To horse hire and expenses for the officers and guard from Falmouth to Cambridge,	19,0,0
To vessels hire and finding the crew to bring the officers from Machias to Falmouth,	12,0,0
To 5 guard's wages and expenses to guard the officers and one (tory ?) from Falmouth to Cambridge,	12,0,0

To hire of a small schooner and 2 men, 9 days to go to Annapolis for a Surgeon* for wounded men,	10,10,0
To expense for the carriage of officers' bag- gage,	6,0,0

	£244,12,0

Watertown, August 12th, 1775,

Errors excepted

JEREMIAH OBRIEN.

The following additional bill of expenses is also
of interest:

“Dr.— Colony of Massachusetts, for guarding
and carrying prisoners taken in the schooners *Dili-*
gent and *Tatamagouch* from Machias to Headquar-
ters, sundries, viz:

Captain Jeremiah O'Brien 54 days and his expenses, hire of two horses and their keeping and shoeing, provisions, &c., furnished at Saco on his return.”	} £41,1,0
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As several documents of a public character have
already appeared, and as others will hereafter appear,

* The surgeon referred to above is Dr. William Chaloner, who was brought from Annapolis, Nova Scotia, to Machias, Me., to attend the men wounded on the *Unity* and the *Margaretta*, June 12, 1775. As there was no resident physician in Machias at the time, Dr Chaloner subsequently brought his family there and settled, becoming one of its leading citizens. He was a native of Newport, R. I., and had been educated in the American Colonies.

in this biography—documents containing terms with which readers in general are not perhaps familiar, we beg to make the following explanations: The term “General Court” has always been used in Massachusetts from the earliest period down to the present time to indicate the Legislature, that is, both branches, whether referring to the deputies and magistrates in the early days, to the Council and representatives in the Provincial period, or to the Senators and Representatives since the formation of the State Government. The term “House of Representatives” applies, of course, to the lower House or the Representatives to the General Court. The term “Council” applies to the upper body which made the concurrent branch of the Legislature or General Court during the Provincial period, and in the interregnum between 1775 and 1780 when the present Constitution establishing a Senate and House of Representatives was accepted. The Council originally was a body similar to the present Council chosen under the law to assist the Governor and pass measures in action with him. They fulfilled, up to the inauguration of the State Government, two different spheres of action. They were at the same time assistants to the Executive, all matters dealt with by the Governor being with their advice and consent, and also acted as an upper branch of the legislative body.

During the Revolutionary period, that is between the close of the 3d Provincial Congress and the adoption of the State Constitution, the Council as a body acted as the Executive Government of Massachusetts. The term "The Honorable Committee of Council" refers simply to a committee of the Council appointed for some definite purpose or to deal with some special subject. The term "Council Chamber" simply refers to the room wherein the Council sat, and from which all their official acts were dated.

In recognition of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien's exceptional abilities as a naval officer, as displayed in his brilliant achievements in Machias Bay on June 12 and July 12, 1775, already described, the Council of the Massachusetts Province appointed him commander of the *Machias Liberty* and the schooner *Diligent*. Following is the record of the action of the Council in the matter:

"COUNCIL CHAMBER, WATERTOWN, August 19th,
1775.

You are hereby ordered and directed to deliver to Captain Jeremiah O'Brien (for the use of a company of men to be raised at Machias) 100 lb. weight of powder and ball equivalent he to be accountable for the same.

By order of the major part of the Council,

PEREZ MORTON, Depy. Secy.

	James Otis	James Prescott
To	Wm. Sever	Eldad Taylor
The Committee	Caleb Cushing	Chas. Chauncey
of Supplies,	J Winthrop	M. Farly
Watertown.	Benja. Chadborn	J. Palmer
	Joseph Gerrish	S. Holten
	Enoch Freeman	Jabez Fisher
	John Whetcomb	

A true Copy

Attest

P. MORTON, Depy. Secy.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AUGUST
23D, 1775:

Resolved : That there be paid out of the public treasury of this Colony to Captain Jeremiah Obrian, appointed *Commander* of the armed schooner *Diligent* and of the sloop *Machias Liberty*, now lying in the harbor of Machias, fixed for the purpose of guarding the sea coast, the sum of one Hundred and Sixty Pounds lawful money of this Colony, for supplying the men with provisions and ammunition; also that there be delivered to the said Obrian out of the Colony store One Hundred Cannon Balls of three pounds weight each, and Two Hundred Swivel Balls, for all which, and the captures he shall make he is to account with this Court.

pass'd

August 23d, 1775

Sent up for concurrence,

JAS. WARREN, Speaker.

In Council read and approved.

Perez Morton, Dpy. Secy.

Consented to by

James Otis

W. Sever

B. Greenleaf

W. Spooner

J. Winthrop

T. Cushing

Saml. Adams

John Whetcomb

Enoch Freeman

Jedh. Foster

James Prescott

Eldah Taylor

Benja. Lincoln

Chas. Chauncey

M. Farly.”





SITE OF COLONEL JEREMIAH O'BRIEN'S HOUSE, MACHIAS, ME.
The above picture was taken from the Machiasport road. The approximate site of Colonel O'Brien's house erected about the year 1774, was somewhat to the left of a clump of hicc bushes visible in the picture. See page 14.

CHAPTER VII

COMMENCEMENT OF A SERIES OF CRUISES.

Captain O'Brien Returns to Machias—Assumes Command of the Flying Squadron—Gathers Crews for His Cruisers—Appoints His Officers—Wages of Officers and Men—Captain O'Brien Handicapped from the Start—Scarcity of Ammunition—Obliged to Hug the Coast—Growing Discontent of Captain O'Brien's Crews—Racial Prejudice—Tory Influence Brought to Bear Against Captain O'Brien—He Makes Several Important Captures—Communication of Captain O'Brien to the Provincial Congress—Appointed to Act with the Newburyport Committee of Safety—Reply of Said Committee to the Provincial Congress—Ammunition Voted to Captain O'Brien—Petition of Poor Seaman.

“Miss not the occasion; by the forelock take
That subtle power, the never-halting time,
Lest a mere moment's putting off should make
Mischance almost as heavy as a crime.”

—*Wordsworth*

“I courted fame but as a spur to brave
And honest deeds; and who despises fame
Will soon renounce the virtues that deserve it.”

—*Mallet*

“Envy is but the smoke of low estate
Ascending still against the fortunate.”—*Lord Brooke*

“Amongst the sons of men how few are known
Who dare be just to merit not their own.”—*Churchill*

UPON his return from the Provincial Congress to Machias, probably during the first part of the month of September, 1775, Captain O'Brien, after receiving a royal welcome from his fellow-townsmen,

at once assumed command of the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent* to which, as a recognition of his previous naval services, he had been appointed by the above-named body. During his absence of about a month from home these two vessels had been lying "in the harbor of Machias." The statement to be found in not a few accounts of the capture of the *Diligent* and *Tapnaquish*, that they were "taken in triumph to Watertown," and delivered up to the Provincial authorities, is far from correct, since as previously stated, they were both taken up to Machias the same day of their surrender, and there lay during the absence of Captain O'Brien at Cambridge and Watertown. For a corroboration of this statement the reader is referred to the Resolution of the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, of the date of August 23, 1775, which may be found in the Sixth chapter of this volume. Under the efficient supervision of Captain O'Brien the work of fitting out the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent* as American cruisers was completed, after which crews were promptly gathered in the village and vicinity for both vessels. Captain O'Brien took personal command of the *Machias Liberty*, with its crew of forty men; and William O'Brien, a younger brother of Jeremiah, was appointed First Lieutenant, and William Miller, Second Lieutenant. The armament of the *Machias*

Liberty consisted of five guns and ten swivels; she had ports, however, for eight guns. Of the *Diligent*, John Lambert, of Machias, was appointed the Captain; and John O'Brien, another brother of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, was appointed First Lieutenant. This latter vessel was also manned by a crew of forty men, her armament consisting of eight guns and twenty swivels. The *Machias Liberty*, to make use of a modern naval phrase, was the *Flagship* of this, the *First American Naval Flying Squadron employed in connection with the War of the Revolution*. As soon as the necessary preparations could be completed Captain O'Brien, accompanied by the hearty godspeeds of his numerous friends at home, set sail with his "flying squadron" from Machias, the scene of his first naval triumphs, for a cruise; or rather a series of cruises, which did not terminate until the month of October of the following year (1776), a period of one year and four months, during which time he was engaged in guarding the sea coast—preventing vessels from taking arms, ammunition and provisions to the British army of occupation, or otherwise aiding the British military authorities. The quaint language of the times employed in describing the work in which Captain O'Brien's squadron was engaged was that they were "cruising on the sea coast * * * for

the defence of American Liberty." Maclay, in his "History of American Privateers," a work of recent publication, in speaking of Captain O'Brien in regard to his connection with this series of cruises says: "He was highly successful." In accordance with instructions from the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts Captain O'Brien was restricted in his naval operations to the Massachusetts coast, which extended over a distance of at least five hundred miles. A more limited field of operations would doubtless have been more favorable to his success, so far, particularly, as the capture of British vessels was concerned.

The commercial navy of Great Britain, at the opening of the War of the Revolution, according to the best information available, comprised 7000 vessels. The fact that Great Britain had at the same period more than 350 armed vessels afloat renders the term "Mistress of the Seas"—applied to her, highly appropriate. The total number of privateers fitted out from Massachusetts ports during the Revolution was about 600, of which number about 150 went forth from Salem alone. From other American Colonies, during the first year or more, particularly, of the Revolution, few privateers sailed. The herculean task, therefore, in which Captain O'Brien and his fellow-privateersmen were engaged may easily be imagined by our readers. The privateer service, we

beg to remark, required men, and particularly officers, of mettle—men of “that temperament which is susceptible of high excitement; constitutional ardor; spirit; full of fire.” In Captain Jeremiah O’Brien the Massachusetts Colony had such a man.

In consequence of the scarcity of ammunition in the Colonies, and the insufficient quantity furnished his vessels, Captain O’Brien was compelled to operate near the shore. It is a well-authenticated fact that nearly all the engagements between American and British armed vessels during the first years, particularly, of the War of the Revolution, took place near the coast, for the reason that our vessels, owing to the small quantity of ammunition carried by them, considered it highly imprudent to follow an enemy to sea, for fear that in the midst of an engagement the meagre supply of ammunition might suddenly give out, in which case they would be at the mercy of the amply-supplied foe. If this occurred near the shore our vessels could run into a friendly harbor and find safety. If any corroboration of the above statement is required we beg to quote the following words from a reliable naval authority:* “The scarcity of ammunition rendered it impracticable for our cruisers in the Revolution to keep long at sea, so they stayed near the coast, and most of the fights were there.”

* Lieut. G. F. Emmons, United States Navy.

Another and more serious embarrassment, however, to Captain O'Brien during his service with the "flying squadron," was the general and growing discontent amongst his crews, "from our First Lieutenants down to our cooks," owing to the small wages allowed them, and the irregularity with which they received what the Provincial Congress had agreed to pay them. The crews of Captain O'Brien's vessels had doubtless been enlisted with the expectation of receiving the same amount of monthly wages as were paid to other crews in the Colony service, but in this they were doomed to disappointment. It may not be uninteresting to our readers to learn that the monthly wages actually paid the officers and crews of the two vessels commanded by Captain O'Brien, during the first six months of their Colony service, were as follows: Captain, £4; First Lieutenant, £3; Second Lieutenant, £2, 10s; Surgeon, £2, 10s; Master, £2, 10s; Boatswain, £1, 10s; Carpenter, £1, 10s; Gunner, £1, 10s; Pilot and Quartermaster, £1, 10s; Steward, £1, 10s; Master-at-Arms, £1, 10s; Foremast Men, £1, 4s. There seems to have been, for some reason, a discrimination made on the part of the Massachusetts Congress in the matter of wages promised to those engaged in the Colony naval service, in favor of the officers and crews of other vessels than those of Captain O'Brien, presumably those

sailing from ports in the vicinity of Boston. In corroboration of the suggestion of discrimination in the matter of wages, and of the fact that Captain O'Brien and his crews so viewed the matter, we beg to present the following extract from a communication of Captain O'Brien to the "Honorable Council and House of Representatives for the Massachusetts State," written in the month of October, 1776: "We (Captains O'Brien and Lambert) told them (the crews of the *Machias Liberty* and *Diligent*) we would go and make application to the two Houses, not doubting but they would be discounted with (reasoned with ?) agreeable to the contract of the other vessels of the same State; asserting that they (the two Houses) had so high a sense of honor and justice, that they would not *make fish of the one and flesh of the other; but that all their shipping would be upon a level.*" Up to the date of the communication of Captain O'Brien to the General Court of Massachusetts just referred to, which at a later stage of this chapter will be given in full, there had been such general and increasing discontent amongst the crews of his squadron, on account of the low wages promised them, the irregularity of payment and the more liberal offers frequently made them to serve in private vessels, that it required the exercise of the highest wisdom on the part of their brave commander, to

keep them in the Colony service. It may be well to remark in this connection, that it was during the period that Captain O'Brien commanded the "flying squadron" that the Continental Congress issued letters of marque and reprisal against Great Britain. This greatly stimulated individuals in the Colonies to fit out armed vessels to engage in privateering, and hundreds went out to prey upon British commerce; and as above suggested, the higher wages paid by them to their crews, and the better provisions made for their comfort, produced widespread discontent amongst those in the Colony service, whose wages were insignificant in comparison. As an indication of the great privations endured by Captain O'Brien's crews during their service in the "flying squadron," it may be said that in one of his communications to the General Court of Massachusetts he says: "The men on board have not sufficient clothing to defend them against the inclemency of the weather;" and in another communication he speaks of "the chief of the men being almost naked." A less brave and patriotic officer, in the face of the immense difficulties that confronted him, would have become disheartened, and abandoned the service of the Colony; but his ardent and unquenchable patriotism surmounts them all, and moves him to such expressions as: "*we hold ourselves ready and willing to serve for the*

good of the country," and, "*the interests of the State lying near our hearts.*" As a means of allaying, if possible, the discontent of his crews, and thereby retaining them in the Colony service, Captain O'Brien spent more than his own monthly stipend (sometimes borrowing money on his personal responsibility in order to procure the cash for immediate use) toward supplying the deficiency of their own meagre, and irregularly paid wages; and this he did not knowing whether it would ever be returned to him. He used his own money also toward supplying provisions for his vessels; and that he was ever reimbursed for these outlays, there is, so far as the author is aware, no record. Captain O'Brien, viewing the matter from the standpoint of his own high sense of justice and honor, had evidently encouraged his men in the belief that they would receive the same amount of wages as those paid the crews of other vessels employed in the Colony service; but while lying at Newburyport, in the month of February, 1776, the report reached the ears of Captain O'Brien's men that their wages would continue—to use the phraseology of the day—"according to the first establishment." Such was the state of affairs on board his vessels; so near were the crews to abandoning the Colony service altogether, and leaving him "in the lurch," that Captain O'Brien was at length obliged

to go personally, and at his own expense, to the General Court of Massachusetts in session at Watertown, where he laid before that body the long standing grievances of his men, and pleaded earnestly for an increase of their wages. This increase of wages was officially promised him; indeed, he was encouraged to believe the increase would take place immediately; and, to employ the language of Captain O'Brien: "We, retaining so exalted an opinion of the Honorable Council, returned to our respective vessels well composed to execute the orders received from your Honors." In accordance with the tardy action of the General Court of Massachusetts the wages of the officers and crews of the "flying squadron" were several months subsequently increased, so that from February, 1776, to October 15, 1776, the date of their discharge from the Colony service, the wages of Captains were £8 per month; and of other officers in proportion, seamen receiving £2 per month as against £1, 4s formerly received. For this increase of wages his officers and crews may thank Captain O'Brien.

It is highly probable, at least, (and of this matter the author with great reluctance speaks) that racial prejudice was in no small measure responsible for the discrimination against Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, and the crews of the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent*, (not a few of whom, officers particularly, were either of

foreign birth or of foreign descent) by reason of which he was so seriously hampered during the latter part of his first year's cruise with the "flying squadron." The fact that Captain O'Brien and the greater part of his crews were from the isolated settlements on the extreme eastern frontier of the Massachusetts Colony, may also have unfavorably impressed the State authorities, and influenced them in what seems to have been a deliberate withholding of the hearty support extended to those employed in the Colony naval service from other localities. The author begs to remark that during the first five years of the War of the Revolution the naval affairs (as well as affairs in general) of Massachusetts were almost exclusively in the hands of the "Committee of the Council." This Committee, "assumed most of the powers of an independent sovereignty."* It is the opinion of the author, which he might not be able to establish to the satisfaction of all readers of this volume, (even were he disposed to attempt it) that a few of Captain O'Brien's one-time Machias friends, were induced by the influential tory element of that village—

"For *malice* will with joy the lie receive,
Report, and what it wishes true believe,"†—

to actively join in the movement to bring a pressure to

* William Walton, in "The Army and Navy of the United States."

† Yalden.

bear upon a body of men who, by reason of their peculiar constitution and sovereign powers, were more susceptible to outside influence than a larger body would have been. The result of that movement was anything but helpful to a brave and patriotic and efficient naval officer, whose misfortune it was (from the New England view-point of his times) to have foreign blood coursing in his veins. The explanation of the change of feeling and attitude toward Captain O'Brien by the few former Machias friends and compatriots already referred to, it may not be easy to formulate in words. They may have been envious of Captain O'Brien's brilliant achievements upon the sea, and of the public and personal encomiums showered upon him in gratitude for his remarkable victories at the opening of the Revolution; they may have been actuated by a morbid scrupulousness in their petty persecutions of an absent fellow-citizen; or their course may be accounted for on the ground of ignorance of the facts in the case—lack of experience in the practical affairs of life;—the author is indisposed to deny that the latter explanation may be the true one, as well as the most charitable to entertain. These things are mentioned, not in the way of condemnation of the Revolutionary Fathers, nor in the spirit of acrimonious criticism, of men who now lie in "the port of rest from troublous toil," but *purely as an*

act of justice to a brave and meritorious naval officer whose name deserves to, and will go down into history as one of the most ardent patriots and most notable heroes of the Seven Years' Struggle for National Independence. What Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, with the hearty and continuous support of the General Court of Massachusetts, and of all his friends at home, would have accomplished in the Colony service while in command of the "flying squadron," in the way of captures, may easily be inferred by our readers from his actual achievements on the water. It is a most gratifying illustration of the diminution of racial prejudice in the United States that a distinguished New Englander—the Hon. John D. Long, Secretary of the Navy under our martyred President, William McKinley, and his successor President Theodore Roosevelt—with the general approval of the American people, has named one of the new vessels of our modern navy after the gallant American officer, the memory of whose heroic deeds, and invaluable services to his country, this volume seeks to perpetuate—reference is here made to the torpedo boat "O'Brien." This is the first instance of an American naval vessel being given an Irish name. A suitable account of the torpedo boat "O'Brien" will appear at a later stage of our story. In spite, however, of the serious embarrassments under which

Captain Jeremiah O'Brien labored during the period referred to, he made, with his "flying squadron," several important captures, among which were the following:

Sometime during the autumn of the year 1775, Captain O'Brien re-captured a schooner that had fallen into the hands of the enemy; and also a cutter and two barges, with thirty-five men under the command of a Lieutenant of the British sloop-of-war *Falcon*, that was operating in Gloucester Bay. In this latter capture the Americans had one man killed and two wounded. The last capture referred to is said by most authors to have been made on the 9th of August, 1775; but the fact is Captain O'Brien was at the date mentioned, either at Watertown, or on his way there from Machias; and the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent* were both "lying in the harbor of Machias." It was not until his return to Machias the first part of the month of September, 1775, that Captain O'Brien assumed the command of the two vessels just named; so that the captures above-mentioned were probably made during the month of September or October, 1775. Passing over, because of a lack of reliable data, (concerning Captain O'Brien's captures) the intervening period, we come to the month of January, 1776,—the latter part of the month—when we find Captain O'Brien and his

The Petition of Jeremiah O'Brien
Humbly Sheweth

that your Petitioner has been in
the Colony served since the Twenty first
Day of August last as Comm^r in Chief of
The Hoop Macks Liberty & Schooner
Diligent which two Vessels

Newbury completely Equipt for Sea,
with about fifty Men on board them-
Reddy for any Service the Honorable
Court shall think fit to employ them
in, one vessel has four Carriage Guns
Ten Swivels the other has five Carriage
Guns & Twenty Swivels, has Ports for
Eight Carriages, has accommodations for
Sixty five Men each. We are all waiting
the Determination of the Hon^l Court
whether we are to be Discharg'd or to be
further Employ'd in the Colony Service
Your Petitioner can Recommend to ye
Hon^l Court the under Officers & Gunn
to be men well skill'd in the Business
as in Duty bound shall ever Pray

To
the Hon^l Council } Jeremiah O'Brien
& House of Representatives }

In Council Feb 22^d 1776 Read & sent down

J. M. Norton Clerk



“ flying squadron ” in Newburyport, presumably for repairs of his vessels, and for a fresh supply of provisions and ammunition. It was during Captain O'Brien's stay in Newburyport, that the communication following was received from him by the Provincial Congress: *

“ THE PETITION OF JEREMIAH O'BRIEN

Humbly Sheweth—

That your petitioner has been in the Colonial service since the twenty-first day of August last as Commander-in-Chief of the Sloop *Machias Liberty* and the Schooner *Diligent*, which two vessels are in Newburyport completely equipped for sea, with about fifty men on board them ready for any service the Honorable Court shall think fit to employ them in. One vessel has four carriage guns and ten swivels; the other has five carriage guns and twenty swivels—has ports for eight carriages, has accommodations for sixty-five men each. We are all awaiting the determination of the Honorable Court whether we are to be discharged or to be further employed in the Colony service. Your petitioner can recommend to the Honorable Court the under officers and gunners to be men

* In this volume may be seen a fac-simile of the above document in its original form which is in the handwriting of Captain O'Brien. The fac-simile was made from a tracing, by the author, of the original document, in the month of September, 1901.

well-skilled in the business. As in duty bound shall ever pray,

JEREMIAH OBRIEN,

To the Honorable Council
and House of Represent-
atives.

In Council Feby. 2d, 1776. Read and sent down.

PEREZ MORTON,
Dep. Sec."

The following resolution of the Council of the Massachusetts Colony, appointing Captain O'Brien to co-operate with the Committee of Safety of Newburyport, in getting the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent* ready for sea, is indicative of the confidence reposed in the efficiency of the hero of the *Margaretta* capture, and of the subsequent capture of the *Diligent* and the *Tapnaquish*:

"TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, Feb. 7th,
1776.

Whereas it is of importance that the enemies of the Colonies should as far as possible be deprived of necessary supplies whereby they may be rendered the less capable of distressing these and the other Colonies aforesaid, and to effect this purpose it is expedient, and necessary armed vessels should be fitted and employed to prevent supplies getting into the hands of our said enemies—Therefore, Resolved, That the

Committee of Correspondence, Inspection and Safety of Newbury Port with Captain Jeremiah Obrian be a Committee to prepare, and in all respects equip, and man with fifty men each including officers, the sloop *Machias Liberty* and schooner *Diligent* now lying at Newbury Port, and that the said Committee recommend such proper persons to the Honorable Council as may be necessary for officers of said vessels for the purpose above-mentioned, and when said vessels are prepared as aforesaid the officers belonging to said vessels be commissioned by and follow such directions as they shall receive from time to time from the Council of this Colony.

And be it further Resolved, That the following sums set against the several officers and men engaged in the above service shall be paid them upon their faithfully discharging the duties assigned them, viz:*

	<i>Per Month.</i>		<i>Per Month.</i>
A Captain,	£4	Carpenter,	£1,10s
1st Lieut.,	£3	Gunner,	£1,10s
2d Lieut,	£2,10s	Pilot & Quar-	
Surgeon,	£2,10s	ter Master,	£1,10s
Master,	£2,10s	Steward,	£1,10s
Boatswain,	£1,10s	Master at	
		Arms,	£1,10s
		Foremast	
		Men,	£1,4s

* It was the report of this action of the Massachusetts Council with regard to the wages to be paid the officers and crews of the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent* which reached the ears of Captain O'Brien's men while they were in Newburyport, and produced such general discontent amongst them.

And for further encouragement to the said officers and seamen—It is Resolved, That they shall be entitled to one-third the proceeds of all captures that shall be by them made, and finally condemned agreeable to a law of this Colony made, and passed in the present session of the General Court entitled 'An Act for fixing out armed vessels,' and for the trial, and condemnation of vessels, that have been employed in aiding, and assisting our enemies, and in such proportions as is allowed the officers and seamen of the armed vessels fitted out on account of the United Colonies by his Excellency General Washington.

Sent up for concurrence

J. WARREN, Spkr.

In Council Feb. 8, 1776.

Read and concurred with the amendment at (illegible).

The above establishment to continue until the last day of December next, unless this Court shall think it expedient to discharge them sooner.

Sent down for concurrence,

PEREZ MORTON, D. Secry.

In the House of Representatives, Feb. 7th, 1776.

Sent up.

Read and concurred.

Consented to—

B. Greenleaf

Jedh. Foster

Moses Gill

W. Spooner	J. Palmer	B. White
Caleb Cushing	Mich. Farley	Eldad Taylor
J. Cushing	S. Holten	B. Lincoln
John Whetcomb	Jabez Fisher	John Taylor."

The reply of the Committee of Safety of Newburyport to the preceding Resolution was as follows:

“TO THE HONORABLE, THE COUNCIL OF THE COLONY OF MASSACHUSETTS BAY:—

The Committee of Safety, Correspondence and Inspection of Newburyport beg leave to acknowledge the receipt last evening of a Resolve of the Honorable General Court passed the 8th of this present month, appointing them ‘with Captain Jeremiah Obrien a Committee to prepare and in all respects equip and man with fifty men each including officers the sloop *Machias Liberty* and schooner *Diligent* now lying at Newburyport, &c.’

The Committee with pleasure will undertake and perform all in their power, and can engage to purchase the necessary articles wanted except gunpowder. Of that essential article they with reluctance say, not a cask can be procured here at any rate. The pressing demands of this town have called for every exertion in their power to raise monies, notwithstanding the town is greatly in debt, not being able to furnish enough to pay the necessary current services—therefore to make it possible to comply with the

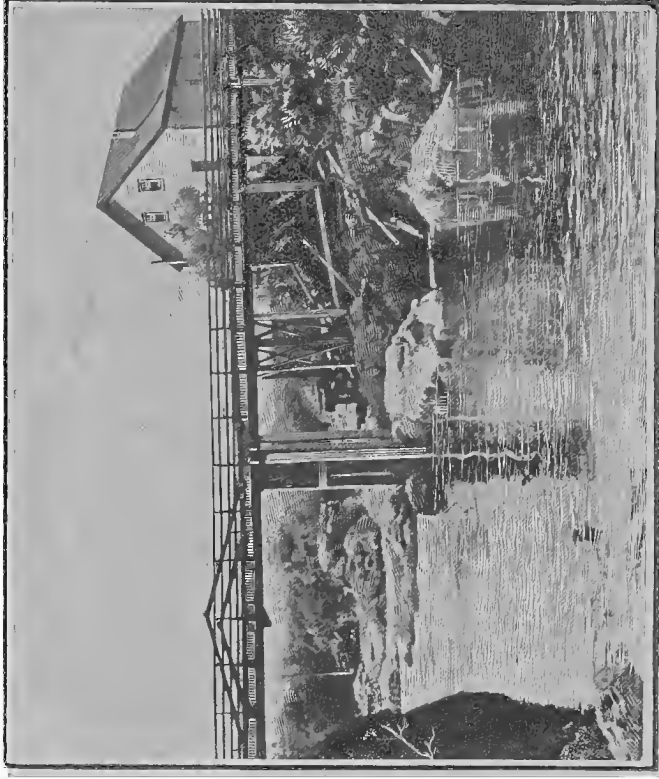
aforesaid Resolve, the Committee humbly hope the Honorable Council will furnish them by the bearer, Captain Michael Hodge, one of their members, with as much money as the present occasion calls for— which by a moderate calculation for two months cruise only, with the fixing the vessels, will amount to five hundred pounds lawful money, exclusive of the cost of gunpowder, (which is not to be had here) and of which Captain Obrien thinks there ought to be five hundred pounds weight, beside one hundred and twenty pounds now on hand. The Committee apprehend that the fifty men for each vessel or any considerable number of them cannot be found in this town, owing to a large number being in the Continental Army, and to several Privateers out on cruizes Captain Obrien says he can make up the deficiency in the eastward harbours, if your Honors think it proper to let him depart hence without his full complement. As Captain Obrien must probably collect his men from thence, and his present officers, whom he approves of may be most agreeable to such men, the Committee hopes the Honorable Council will excuse them from recommending said officers for this reason only, that they are entire strangers to them.

Per order of Committee,

TRISTAM DALTON, Chairman.

Newburyport, {
 Feby. 24th, 1776. } "

P. T.



"LOWER BRIDGE," MACHIAS, ME.

Over the bridge which stood on the site occupied by the bridge above shown the British military forces marched on the morning (September 11, 1814,) of their entrance into Machias, of which they took possession. See page 6.

The insufficient quantity of ammunition furnished to Captain O'Brien for use in the Colony naval service, has already been mentioned as among the things contributing to his embarrassment; we beg to give an example:—It will be noticed from the reply of the Newburyport Committee of Safety to the Honorable Council of the Massachusetts Colony that Captain O'Brien's estimate of the quantity of gunpowder required for a two months cruise of his "flying squadron," was five hundred pounds, in addition to the one hundred and twenty pounds "now on hand." But as the following resolve shows, Captain O'Brien was allowed *less than one half the quantity of gunpowder asked for.*

"IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, March 16th, 1776.

Resolved, That the Commissary General for this Colony be directed to procure and deliver to Captain Jeremiah Obrian *two hundred weight of gunpowder* for the use of the sloop *Machias Liberty* and the schooner *Diligent*—he being accountable to this Colony for the same.

Sent up for concurrence

WILLIAM COOPER, Sp. P. T.

In Council, March 16th, 1776,

Read and concurred

PEREZ MORTON, D. Secy.

Consented to—

B. Greenleaf	Jedh. Foster	Moses Gill
W. Spooner	J. Palmer	S. Holten
Caleb Cushing	Jabez Fisher	B. White
John Whetcomb	John Taylor	Eldad Taylor
J. Cushing	Mich. Farley	B. Lincoln."

Following is the petition of several indigent seamen who had served under Captain O'Brien, asking assistance from the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts; it is presented as an illustration of the abiding interest of Captain O'Brien in his men, and of his disposition to assist them in a time of need: "The petition of a number of poor seamen, Humbly Sheweth, that whereas they have been in the Colony service under the command of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien ever since last September, and still remain in said service. Your petitioners have been at great expense for the doctor and his attendance in sickness, which expense they are not able to discharge unless the Honorable Court will in their great wisdom think proper to order such sum of money as will discharge the annexed accounts, and your petitioners as in duty bound shall ever pray,
Newburyport, March

22, 1776.

Donald McDonald
Samuel Whitney
John Wilks

To the Honorable George Coague
Council and House David Thompson
of Representatives Jeremiah O'Brien in behalf
assembled at Water- Lieut. James Elliott
town. Jonathan Woodruff
Thomas Dobel
James Cant
Jeremiah O'Brien, behalf
Daniel Babb, 'Decd.
Daniel Philbrook."



CHAPTER VIII.

CAPTAIN JEREMIAH O'BRIEN ENCOUNTERS SNAGS.

Letters of Marque and Reprisal Against Great Britain Issued by the Continental Congress—Form of Commission—Instructions to Privateer Commanders—Sundry Papers of Captain O'Brien Considered by the General Court of Massachusetts—Capture of the Sloop *Polly* by Captain O'Brien—Petition of Captain O'Brien to the General Court of Massachusetts.

"It is true fortitude to stand firm against
All shocks of fate, when cowards faint and die
In fear to suffer more calamity."—*Massinger*.

"What is *difficulty*? Only a word indicating the degree of strength requisite for accomplishing particular objects; a mere notice of the necessity for exertion; a bugbear to children and fools; only a mere stimulus to men."—*Samuel Warren*.

"The greatest man is he * * * who is calmest in storms, and whose reliance on truth, on virtue, on God, is the most unfaltering."—*Channing*.

SOON after the capture of the two British vessels the *Diligent* and the *Tapnaquish*, by Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, in Machias Bay, the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts passed a law granting commissions to privateers, and directing the forcible seizure of British vessels upon the sea. It was under a commission issued in accordance with the law just mentioned that Captain O'Brien, while in command

of the "flying squadron," preyed upon the shipping of Great Britain.

It was subsequent to the passage of the law enacted by the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts, that "the sagacious general (Washington) knowing that the British forces in Boston were supplied with provisions and munitions of war by sea, conceived the idea of fitting out some swift sailing cruisers to intercept the enemy's cruisers, and cut off their supplies"; and this he did.

On the 13th of October, 1775, the Continental Congress "directed that one vessel of 10 guns, and another of 14 guns, be equipped as national cruisers. At the same time a law was passed establishing a Marine Committee, consisting Messrs. John Adams, John Langdon and Silas Dean—the place of Mr. Adams being afterward supplied by Mr. Gadsden. This Committee was chosen by Congress from their own number and given control of all Naval Matters."*

LETTERS OF MARQUE AND REPRISAL WERE ISSUED
BY THE UNITED COLONIES OF AMERICA AGAINST
GREAT BRITAIN ON THE 23D OF MARCH, 1776.

Following is a transcript of the action taken by the Continental Congress in the matter:

"Resolved, That the inhabitants of these Colonies be permitted to fit out armed vessels to cruise on

* Lieut. G. F. Emmons, U. S. N.

the enemies of these United Colonies. Resolved, That all ships and other vessels, their tackle, apparel, and furniture, and all goods, wares, and merchandize, belonging to any inhabitant or inhabitants of Great Britain, taken on the high seas, or between high and low water mark, by any armed vessel, fitted out by any person or persons, and to whom commissions shall be granted, and being libelled and prosecuted in any court erected for the trial of maritime affairs, in any of these Colonies, shall be deemed and adjudged to be lawful prizes; and after deducting and paying the wages which the seamen and mariners on board of such captures, as are merchant ships and vessels, shall be entitled to, according to the terms of their contracts, until the time of their adjudication, shall be condemned to and for the use of the owner or owners, and the officers, and mariners of such armed vessel, according to such rules and proportions as they shall agree on: Providing always, that this resolution shall not extend to any vessel bringing settlers, arms, ammunition or warlike stores to and for the use of those Colonies, or any of the inhabitants thereof, who are friends to the American cause, or to such warlike stores, or to the effects of such settlers. Resolved, That all ships or vessels, with their tackle, apparel, and furniture, goods, wares, and merchandise, belonging to any inhabitant

of Great Britain aforesaid, which shall be taken by any of the vessels of war of these United Colonies, shall be deemed forfeitted; one-third, after deducting and paying the wages of seamen and marines as aforesaid, to the officers and men on board, and two-thirds to the use of the United Colonies. Resolved, That all ships and vessels, with their tackle, apparel, and furniture, goods, wares, and merchandizes, belonging to the inhabitants of Great Britain, as aforesaid, and all vessels which may be employed in carrying supplies to the ministerial armies, which shall happen to be taken near the shores of any of these Colonies, by the people of the country, or detachments from the army, shall be deemed lawful prize; and the court of admiralty within the said Colony is required on condemnation thereof, to adjudge that all charges and expenses which may attend the capture and trial, be first paid out of the monies arising from the sales of the prize, and the remainder equally among all those who shall have been actually engaged and employed in taking the said prize. Provided, that where any detachments of the army shall have been employed as aforesaid, their part of the prize money shall be distributed among them in proportion to the pay of the officers and soldiers so employed. Resolved, That a committee of five be appointed to consider of the fortifying of one or more ports on the

American coasts, in the strongest manner, for the protection of our cruisers, and the reception of their prizes; that they take the opinion of the best engineers on the manner and expense, and report thereon to the Congress.”

If any warrant or commission issued to Captain Jeremiah O'Brien during the War of the Revolution, is now in existence, the author is not aware of it. Hence the general form of commission is herewith presented as illustrative of the character of commissions under which Captain O'Brien served as a naval officer. The commission issued by the Massachusetts Colony was substantially the same as that given below.

“April 2, 1776.* The committee appointed to prepare the form of a commission, and instructions to commanders of private ships of war, brought in the same, which was read. The commission, being agreed to is as follows: “The delegates of the United Colonies of New Hampshire, &c., to all to whom these presents shall come, greeting: Know that we have granted, and, by these presents, do grant, license and authority to —— mariner, commander of the —— called —— of the burden of —— tons, or thereabouts, belonging to —— of —— in the Colony of —— mounting —— carriage guns, and

* Journals of the Continental Congress, pp. 102-103.

navigated by —— men, to fit out and set forth the said —— in a warlike manner, and by and with the said —— and the crew thereof, by force of arms, to attack, seize, and take the ships and other vessels, belonging to the inhabitants of Great Britain, or any of them, with their tackle, apparel, furniture, and lading, on the high seas, or between high and low water marks, and to bring the same to some convenient ports in the said Colonies, in order that the Courts, which are or shall be there appointed to hear and determine causes civil and maritime, may proceed, in due form, to condemn the said captures, if they be adjudged lawful prize; the said —— having given bond, with sufficient sureties, that nothing be done by the said —— or any of the officers, mariners, or company thereof: contrary to or inconsistent with the usages and customs of nations, and the instructions, a copy of which is herewith delivered to him. And we will require all our officers whosoever, to give succor and assistance to the said —— in the premises. This commission shall continue in force until the Congress shall issue orders to the contrary.

By order of Congress:

Attest _____ President."

On Wednesday, April 3, 1776, the following in-

structions to the commanders of privateers were issued by the Continental Congress:

“INSTRUCTIONS TO THE COMMANDERS OF PRIVATE SHIPS OR VESSELS OF WAR WHICH SHALL HAVE COMMISSIONS OR LETTERS OF MARQUE AND REPRISAL AUTHORIZING THEM TO MAKE CAPTURES OF BRITISH VESSELS AND CARGOES:

1. You may, by force of arms, attack, subdue, and take all ships and other vessels belonging to the inhabitants of Great Britain, on the high seas, or between high water and low water marks, except ships and vessels bringing persons who intend to settle and reside in the United States; or bringing arms, ammunition, or warlike stores, to the said Colonies, for the use of such inhabitants thereof as are friends to the American cause, which you shall suffer to pass unmolested, the commanders thereof permitting a peaceable search, and giving satisfactory information of the contents of the ladings, and destinations of the voyages.

2. You may, by force of arms, attack, subdue, and take all ships and other vessels whatsoever, carrying soldiers, arms, gunpowder, ammunition, provisions, or any other contraband goods, to any of the British armies or ships of war employed against these Colonies.

3. You shall bring such ships and vessels, as

you shall take, with their guns, rigging, tackle, apparel, furniture, and ladings, to some convenient port or ports of the United Colonies, that proceedings may thereon be had, in due form, before the courts, which are or shall be there appointed to hear and determine causes civil and maritime.

4. You, or one of your chief officers, shall bring or send the master and pilot, and one or more principal person or persons of the company of every ship or vessel by you taken, as soon after the capture as may be, to the Judge or Judges of such Court as aforesaid, to be examined upon oath, and make answer to the interrogators which may be propounded, touching the interest or property of the ship or vessel, and her lading; and, at the same time, you shall deliver, or cause to be delivered, to the Judge or Judges, all passes, sea-briefs, charter-parties, bills of lading, dockets, letters, and other documents and writings found on board, proving the said papers, by affidavit of yourself, or of some other person present at the capture, to be produced as they were received, without fraud, addition, subduction or embezzlement.

5. You shall keep and preserve every ship or vessel, and cargo, by you taken, until they shall, by a sentence of a Court properly authorized, be adjudged lawful prizes; not selling, spoiling, wasting, or diminishing the same, or breaking the bulk thereof, nor suffering such thing to be done.

6. If you, or any of your officers or crew, shall, in cold blood, kill or maim, or by torture or otherwise, cruelly, inhumanly, and, contrary to common usage, and the practice of civilized nations in war, treat any person or persons surprised in the ship or vessel you shall take, the offender shall be severely punished.

7. You shall, by all convenient opportunities, send to Congress written accounts of the captures you shall make, with the number and names of the captives, copies of your journal from time to time, and intelligence of what may occur or be discovered concerning the desigus of the enemy, and the destinations, motions, and operations of their fleets and armies.

8. One-third, at least, of your whole company shall be land-men.

9. You shall not ransom any prisoners or captives, but shall dispose of them in such manner, as the Congress, or, if that be not fitting, in the Colony whither they shall be brought, as the general assembly, convention, council, or committee of safety, of such Colony, shall direct.

10. You shall observe all such further instructions as Congress shall hereafter give in the premises, when you shall have notice thereof.

11. If you shall do anything contrary to these instructions, or to others hereafter to be given, or

willingly suffer such thing to be done, you shall not only forfeit your commission, and be liable to an action for the breach of the condition of your bond, but be responsible to the party grieved for damages sustained by such malversation." By these instructions, as well as by the instructions of the Council of the Massachusetts Colony, Captain O'Brien as a naval officer in the Colony service, was governed, while in command of the "flying squadron."

That Captain O'Brien during the period of his Colony service, kept in close touch with the Colonial authorities is evidenced by his frequent and able communications to the General Court, only a few of which, however, have been preserved. It was with reference to some of his communications that the following action was taken by the body above named:

"IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, June 26th, 1776.

Ordered that Captain Batchelder and Mr. Otis be of the Committee appointed to take into consideration sundry papers exhibited by Captain Jeremiah Obrien, in the room of Mr. Cushing and Coll. Brooks, absent.

Sent up for concurrence,

TIMO. DANIELSON, Spr. p. Tem:

In Council June 26th, 1776.

Read and concurred

JOHN LOWELL, Dpy. Secy. P. T."

The "sundry papers exhibited by Captain Jeremiah Obrien" referred to in the preceding order of the "House of Representatives" of the General Court of Massachusetts doubtless include the petition addressed by him from Newburyport during the month of February, 1776, a copy of which has already been given; and also another petition under date of March 22, 1776, in which several indigent seamen who had served under Captain O'Brien, requested assistance from the General Court of the Massachusetts Colony—Captain O'Brien having affixed his signature on behalf of a few of the petitioners; this latter petition may also be seen in the preceding chapter. Other communications of Captain O'Brien to the General Court of Massachusetts, which are presumably lost may be included in the phrase "sundry papers." Many documents of the Revolutionary times were retained by individual members of the General Court serving on various committees; and not a few of these are still in the hands of their descendants, and hence unavailable to the public.

"Since the generality of persons act from impulse much more than from principle, men are neither so good nor so bad as we are apt to think them."*

"Act upon your impulses, but pray that they may be directed by God."*

If, as the following document declares "is report-

* Hare.

ed," Captain Jeremiah O'Brien ever intimated that he should "not pay any regard to the orders of Court," and "offered one if not both" the vessels of the "flying squadron" for sale, (and that he made the remarks above suggested may, after all, have been a mere idle rumor, or the malicious report of one fond of "cutting honest throats by whispers") it would be far from difficult for one acquainted with his character, to account for his words. Captain O'Brien, was of an impulsive nature, as already remarked. He was outspoken, also. He had encountered during the greater part of the period of his command of the "flying squadron," almost insurmountable difficulties—an insufficiency of ammunition for his vessels, growing discontent amongst his crews, tardy increase of "starvation wages" for his officers and men, petty persecutions from disgruntled or over-scrupulous individuals at home, the self-recognized disadvantage, to his eminent success, of his nationality, the lack of hearty and continuous support by the powers "that be"—hence it would not be surprising if he was at times in a peculiarly sensitive state of mind; and during one of those irritable moods he may have impulsively made some remark which formed the basis of the report which, in exaggerated form, at length reached the ears of the Committee of the Council of the Massachusetts Col-

ony. The poet* doubtless had in mind such cases when he wrote:

“The flying rumous gather'd as they rolled,
Scarce any tale was sooner heard than told,
And all who told it added something new,
And all who heard it made enlargement too,
In every ear it spread, on every tongue it grew.”

So far as Captain O'Brien offering “one if not both vessels” of his squadron for sale is concerned, (assuming that he did so) there is considerable to be said in his favor. The capture of the *Unity* and subsequently of the *Margaretta*, *Diligent* and *Tapnaquish* were all *private enterprises*, conducted by citizens of Machias acting as citizens, and upon their own responsibility. Hence it was not at all certain that in any legal sense these vessels belonged to the Colony of Massachusetts, as such. If the Colony did not own the vessels Captain O'Brien was intelligent enough to recognize the fact; and he had also “backbone” to insist upon the right of the citizens of Machias in the vessels. The language of the document following appears to indicate that the “Committee of the Council” were themselves in a state of uncertainty as to the ownership of the vessels. In a document also to be found near the close of this volume, Captain O'Brien speaks of the Schooner *Diligent* as “*belonging to the inhabitants of Machias.*” Assuming that Captain O'Brien actually intimated that

* Pope.

he should "not pay any regard to the orders of Court," the remark was evidently the offspring of impulse, as appears from the language of his communication to the Council a few days afterward, for he speaks of himself as "awaiting the orders of the Honorable Court." This is not the language of insubordination, by any means. Following is the document referred to:

"The subscribers beg leave to represent to the General Court that two armed vessels, now under the command of Messrs. Obrien and Lambert, have had orders from time to time from the Court, and have cost the public large money, but have effected very little.

That Obrien is said to be now gone to Marblehead for stores for a three months cruise; and it is reported that he intimates that he shall not pay any regard to the orders of Court, and has offered one, if not both those vessels for sale. And that a person now appears who would give the cash for one of those vessels.

From this representation it is suggested to the Court whether it might not be conducive to the public good that an enquiry be made into the property of said vessels, and such measures be taken in the premises as may secure that interest in those vessels which belongs to the Colony. The Committe thought it

their duty to make the above representation and suggestion to the Honorable Court.

Boston, July 13th, 1776.

In Council, July 20, 1776,	}	BENJA. LINCOLN
Read and Committed		J. PALMER
to Richard Darby, Thomas		JOHN BROWNE
Cushing, Esq., and Jno.		SOLOMON LOVELL
Taylor, Esq., to take the		JOHN BACHELLER
same under consideration		
and report.		

JOHN AVERY, Depy. Secy.

It must have been sometime near the middle of the year 1776, that Captain O'Brien captured a vessel named the *Polley*, belonging to one William Hazen, which appeared to have been taking provisions to the enemy. Captain O'Brien's men being in want at the time, he used a part of the cargo of the captured vessel for the immediate relief of his crew. Hazen lodged a complaint against Captain O'Brien with the Council of the Massachusetts Colony, evidently misrepresenting to that body the matter in question. The Council withheld the wages of Captain O'Brien and his crew, pending an investigation. The following communication from Captain O'Brien to the Council explains the Hazen matter, from his point of view, at least, and requests that the matter may be settled in accordance with the principle of justice to all parties concerned :

“ PETITION OF JEREMIAH O'BRIEN FOR HIMSELF
AND THE MACHIAS LIBERTY'S CREW :

Humbly Sheweth, that your petitioner with the above crew hath been employed in the Colony service since the first day of February last and have not received any pay therefor, the chief part of the men being almost naked, and have no other dependence but the money allowed by the Honorable Court, which Court through false representations made to them by Mr. Hazen, have ordered our wages to be stopped, to make good an illegal demand of said Hazen upon us, as we understand to the amount of Eight Hundred Pounds, for goods taken out of his vessel, which, had vessel and cargo been taken would not amount to that sum. The manifest of her cargo was One Thousand Bushels of Salt, Ten Hogsheads of Molasses, Ten Hogsheads of Rum, One Bag of Cotton, Two Small Bags of Coffee, Part of a Cask of Loaf Sugar, One Trunk of Shoes, Cod Lines and Mens' Caps,—out of which your petitioner took for the Colony service: One and Half Hogsheads of Rum, One Barrel of Molasses, Three Quarters of a Hundred of Sugar, One Quarter of Coil Rigging, which your petitioner supposed the vessel to be a lawful prize and the property of the Colony's, and they standing in need of such articles presumed to take them, keeping a proper account thereof and intending to account with the

Colony therefor. Your petitioners hope that act of inadvertence shall not excuse them their pay, but that your honors would take the matter into consideration and award them as in your wisdom shall seem meet. The Sloop that your petitioner commands is now at Marblehead newly graved and fit for sea with two months provision on board, fully manned and awaiting the orders of the Honorable Court. As in duty bound shall ever pray.

JEREMIAH O'BRIAN."

The Committee to whom was referred the petition of Jeremiah O'Brien and John Lambert, (just given) reported verbally, as their opinion that said Commander put to sea immediately, they first giving bond and complying with the orders of this Court in such cases made.



CHAPTER IX.

“ALL'S WELL THAT ENDS WELL.”

Captain O'Brien Gives the Usual Bond—The Complaint of William Hazen, Owner of the *Polley*—Petition of Captain O'Brien to the Committee of the Council—Provisions Voted to the *Machias Liberty*—The Flying Squadron Put Out of Commission—Captain O'Brien's Defense—Gathering Up Loose Ends of Business—Tardy Increase of Wages—Muster Roll of the *Machias Liberty*—A Discrepancy Explained—Report in the Hazen Case.

“The end crowns all;
And that old common arbitrator, time,
Will one day end it.”—*Shakespeare*.

“The end of doubt is the beginning of repose.”
—*Petrarch*.

“Brave spirits are a balm to themselves,
There is a nobleness of mind, that heals
Wounds beyond salves.”—*Cartwright*.

IN accordance with the requirements of the Continental Congress and of the State Legislature as well with reference to privateer commanders, Captain O'Brien, before leaving Newburyport on his last cruise with the “flying squadron,” gave the usual bonds. Following is a copy of the bond given by him:

“Know all men by these presents that we Jeremiah O'Brien of Machias in the County of Lincoln, mariner, and Benjamin Balch, Clerk of Danvers, in

the County of Essex, Francis Shaw, Esq., of Goldboro in the County of Lincoln, stand firmly bound to Henry Gardner, Esq., Treasurer and Receiver General of the Colony of Massachusetts Bay, in the sum of Two Thousand Pounds lawful money, to be paid to said Treasurer or his successor in said office, to the true payment whereof we bind ourselves, our heirs, executors and administrators jointly and severally firmly by these presents, sealed with our seal the Twenty Fifth Day of July, One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Six.

The condition of the above obligation is such that if the above bounden Jeremiah Obrien who is Commander of the Sloop called the *Machias Liberty* in the Colony service of the Massachusetts Bay, and fitted out by order of the Great and General Court, to cruise on the sea coast of America for the defence of American liberty and to make captives of such vessels as shall be supplying the enemies thereof with provisions and other stores, or otherwise infesting the sea coast, and for the making captures of British vessels and cargoes.

Now if the said Jeremiah Obrien shall observe and conduct himself and govern his crew according to the resolves of the Grand American Congress, and according to the acts and orders of the Great and General Court of this Colony relative to armed ves-

sels fitted out for the purpose aforesaid, and follow such instructions as he may receive in pursuance of his commission, the foregoing obligation shall be void, or else remain in full force.

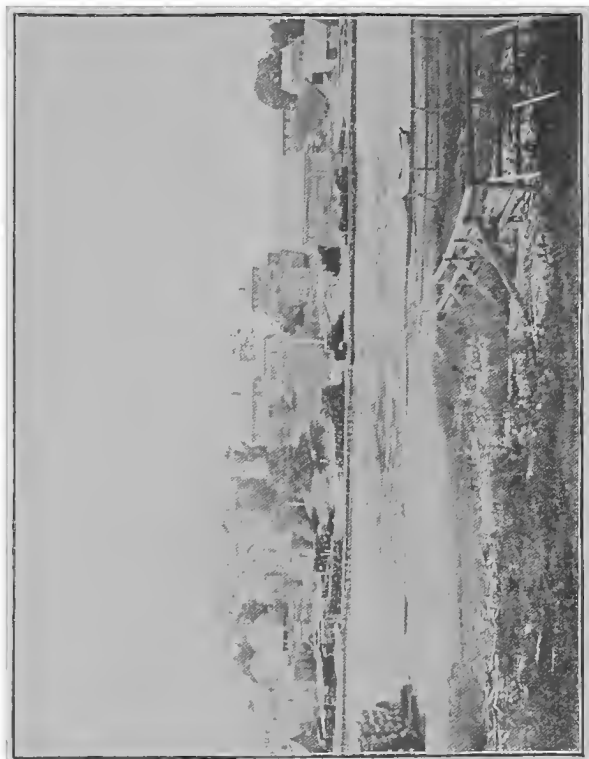
JEREMIAH OBRIEN.

Signed, sealed and delivered	}	BENJA. BALCH FRA. SHAW
In presence of us—		
Caleb Wilder, Joseph Noyes,		
Jno. Furness to F. Shaw		
signing and sealing.		

N. B. The words, Francis Shaw, Esq., of Goldboro in the County of Lincoln, between the third and fourth lines in the within mentioned bond, were interlined before signing and sealing.”

Reference has already been made to the capture by Captain O'Brien of the Schooner *Polley*, owned by William Hazen. Hazen lodged a complaint against Captain O'Brien for embezzlement. The following action of the “Committee of the Council” of Massachusetts has reference to Hazen's complaint against Captain O'Brien:

“And as there is a complaint against one Obriant in sundry of the letters before mentioned, your Committee being informed that a complaint of the same nature, if not the same, is soon to be heard before this Honorable Court, we make no report thereon; and whereas in sundry of the before mentioned letters an information is given of one or more minis-



PARTIAL VIEW OF THE NORTHERN VILLAGE OF MACHIAS, ME.

In this picture may be seen several buildings of rare historic interest, including Libby Hall, standing on the site of the first meeting house, erected in 1774; the house occupied by the Rev. James Lyon, the first pastor of the village church, and the house occupied by one of Mr. Lyon's predecessors, Rev. Marshfield Steele. See page 27.

of this ardent patriot of the War of the Revolution:

“ TO THE HONORABLE COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL ASSEMBLED AT WATERTOWN FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE.

The petition of Jeremiah Obrien in behalf of himself and company humbly sheweth, that he has served with his company on board the Sloop *Machias Liberty* in the Colony service from the first day of February last under many disadvantages, my officers and seamen making repeated applications for money, with which I have supplied them to the amount of Five or Six Hundred Dollars and still lie out of it, which your Honors will readily see is a great disadvantage to me. I have also furnished the sloop and schooner now in the Colony service to the amount of nigh One Hundred and Sixty Pounds lawful money, and as yet have not received any pay therefor. The men on board have not sufficient clothing to defend them against the inclemency of the weather. I have now on board my full compliment of men, who are daily solicited to enter private vessels, and they having such great encouragement renders it very difficult to keep them on board, and unless the Honorable Committee will in their great wisdom order payment it will be impossible to confine them on board. I would also inform you that I have made application to the Commissary for provisions and cannot obtain

any without a draft from the Honorable Committee of Council. We hold ourselves always ready and willing to serve for the good of our country, but we are anxious to know whether we are held in commission or are to be discharged. An immediate answer from your Honors will lay your petitioner under the greatest obligation imaginable. As in duty bound shall ever pray.

JEREMIAH O'BRIEN.

In Council, October 1, 1776.

Read and thereupon Resolved: That the Commissary General of this State be and hereby is directed to furnish necessary provisions from time to time to the men belonging to the sloop *Machias Liberty* under the command of Captain Jeremiah Obrian and in actual service on board the said sloop until the next meeting of the General Court.

JNO. AVERY, Depy. Secy."

"IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, October 14, 1776.

Resolved, That the Hon. Richard Derby, Esq., be and is hereby directed to discharge the Sloop *Machias Liberty* from the service of this State, and to take into his possession all the cannon and other stores which are on board said Sloop and are the property of this State; and the said Richard Derby, Esq., is hereby further directed to discharge Captain Jere-

miah O'Brien and the officers and men under his command from the service of this State.

Sent up for concurrence,

SAM. FREEMAN, Speakr. P. T.

Passed.

In Council, October 15, 1776.

Read and concurred.

JOHN AVERY, Dpy. Secy.

Consented to [by 15 members of the Council]"

The following petition of Captain O'Brien to the "Honorable Council and House of Representatives for the Massachusetts State" was probably presented to that body a short time before he received notice of the discharge of the "flying squadron" from the State service. Captain O'Brien was a man of proud spirit; and while, heretofore, he had not infrequently pleaded with the Provincial and State authorities on behalf of his crews, he had made little reference to himself, or to the peculiar difficulties under which he had labored while in command of the "flying squadron." He now unburdens his heart, as it were, to some extent rehearsing the embarrassments encountered by him in his patriotic endeavor to serve the Colony by which he had been commissioned, and the country in general in whose welfare he was deeply interested. It will be noticed that one of the results of this and of the preceding petition of Captain

O'Brien, was to stir up the authorities to furnish his needy crews with provisions, and to increase his own monthly wages and those of his crews,—a tardy recognition, however, of the valuable services rendered by them to the cause of Freedom. The petition immediately following, which was without doubt drawn up by Captain O'Brien, is an unmistakable exhibition of his ability to wield the pen, as well as the sword, in the cause of justice and right.

“TO THE HONORABLE COUNCIL AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FOR THE MASSACHUSETTS STATE.

The Petition of the following persons humbly sheweth: That we, your petitioners, have served this State as follows: Jeremiah Obrien in the Sloop *Machias Liberty* since the first of February last; John Lambert in the Schooner *Diligent* since the 16th of March last, under many disadvantages, owing to the low establishment issued out for the *Machias* armed vessels that your petitioners commanded, the establishment being as follows: Captain at four pounds per month, First Lieutenat, three pounds, Second Lieutenant and Surgeon 50 | and other officers in proportion; seamen twenty-four shillings. When this came to hand it created a general uneasiness with our officers and men; we were obliged to use all the policy we were masters of to ease the minds of our crews, by telling them that both Houses

stood upon punctilios of honor, that we would stand surety that they should be on a par with the other Colony vessels in the same service, thereafter spending eight or ten Guineas in treating the men at sundry times got them to join their ships, it being money wholly out of our own pockets. This made our seamen easy during our first short cruise, until our arrival at Newburyport; some person then appearing informed the crews that the first establishment would stand good; that again occasioned a general discontent from our First Lieutenants down to our cooks, they then declaring that they would not serve the State on that low establishment, as they were daily solicited much more to their advantage in private vessels. This taking place we told them we would go and make application to the two Houses, not doubting but they would be discounted with agreeable to the contract of the other vessels of the same State, asserting that they had so high a sense of honor and justice that they would not make fish of one and flesh of the other, but that all their shipping would be upon a level. Seeing such an obstruction and the interest of the State lying near our hearts, we proceeded in the following manner: Came from Newburyport at our own expense, to the Honorable Houses for redress, where we presented a petition for the advance of our wages, which was complied with and ordered that we

should be put on the same footing as other vessels in the service, which was sent up to the Honorable Board for concurrence, who informed us it would immediately take place. We retaining so exalted an opinion of the Honorable Council, returned to our respective vessels, well composed to execute the orders received from your Honors. According to that resolve we have made up our Rolls and lodged them with the Committee for that purpose. The latter establishment not appearing proves a hindrance to our Rolls passing till an order from both Houses. We beg that you would consider the interest of your constituents, as losing their time, which may be serviceable at the present day both to themselves and country. But while in this state of uncertainty we cannot be serviceable to either. In duty bound we must inform you that we have spent far more than our wages in the pursuit of them; we therefore request that we may be no longer kept in suspense, but have an immediate order for our wages, and as in duty bound shall ever pray.

JEREMIAH OBRIEN

JOHN LAMBERT."

"IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, October 24,
1776.

Resolved, That Captain Jeremiah Obrien, Commander of the Sloop *Machias Liberty*, and Captain

John Lambert, Commander of the Schooner *Diligent*, who have been employed in the service of this State, together with the rest of their officers and seamen under their respective commands, be and hereby are directed to make up their Rolls on the same establishment from and after the within mentioned first day or February and 16th day of March, with the other officers and seamen in the service of this State.

Sent up for concurrence,

J. WARREN, Spkr.

In Council, October 25, 1776.

Read and concurred.

JOHN AVERY, Depy. Secy.

Consented to [by 15 of the Council]"

With regard to Captain Jeremiah O'Brien and his poorly fed and scantily clothed crews, there seems to have been the same enforced economy practised, as in the case of Paul Revere for services rendered to the Boston Committee of Safety. He presented a bill of £11, 1s,—as recent historical developments show, to the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts for services on behalf of the above-mentioned Committee, including his ride out into the country on the night of April 18, 1775, to warn the inhabitants of the approach of the British regulars, and he was allowed but £8, 4s—a reduction of nearly three pounds. There is little question that if Captain O'Brien and

his crews had, from the time of their entrance into the Colony service, received the wages voted to them at the eleventh hour, and been properly supplied with provisions and ammunition, their efficiency would have been greatly augmented, and the Colony would have been the gainer in consequence.

“ IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, October 17, 1776.

Resolved, That the Treasurer of the State be and he hereby is directed to stop out of the moneys due to Captain Jeremiah Obrien on his muster Roll the sum of Twenty One Pounds for cash supplied the said Captain Obrien by Messrs. Jackson Tracy & Tracy of Newburyport, for the purpose of supplying Captain Obrien's men, and pay the said company of Jackson Tracy & Tracy the said sum of Twenty One Pounds taking their receipt for the same.

Sent up for concurrence,

J. WARREN, Spkr.

Passed.

In Council, October 31st, 1776,

Read and concurred,

JOHN AVERY, Depy. Secy.

Consented to [by 15 of the Council.]”

“ NEWBURY PORT, June 22, 1776.

Gentlemen :

Please to pay Messrs. Jackson Tracy & Tracy or

order Twenty One Pounds lawful money, being for so much cash they have advanced me to pay the Privateer Sloop *Liberty's* men, and charge the same to me.

Your humble servant,

JEREMIAH OBRIEN.

To the Honorable the General
Assembly for the Province of
the Massachusetts Bay."

One of the most interesting discoveries made by the author in his "hunt" for data for this biography was a Muster Roll of the *Machias Liberty*, containing a list of the officers and crew of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien's flagship, giving rank, date of enlistment, and date of discharge, of each man, beside other important information. A *verbatim* copy of this Muster Roll will be found in this volume; in this connection we give only the names of the officers and crew with their rank, while in the complete Muster Roll will be found other matters of special interest:

OFFICERS AND CREW OF THE MACHIAS LIBERTY.

JEREMIAH OBRIEN	Commander
William O'Brien	1st Lieutenant
William Miller	2d Lieutenant
Arthur Dillaway	Master
Donald McDonald	Surgeon
Enoch Pierce	Master's Mate

Thomas Comings	Boatswain
Jacob Hiler	Carpenter
Peter Higgins	Gunner
Dixey Stone	Mate
Samuel Shaw	Steward
James Mulvany	Boatsw. Mate
Seth Harvey	{ Quarter Master and { Master-at-Arms
Daniel Ferril	Captain's Mate
John Souter	Pilot
William Blake	Qr. Master
John Grimes	Cook
Robert Marshall	Drummer

SEAMEN.

John Wilks	John Obrian
James Cant	Samuel Whitney
Thomas Doble	Isaac Taft
George Crague	William Killey
Joseph Wire	Jonathan Woodruff
Caleb Boynton	William East
Manuel Saunders	William Hancock
Daniel Bean	Joseph Hilbert
James Langford	Thomas Newman
Francis Anthony	Nicholas Hye
James Wheeler	Nathaniel Leach
Manuel Joseph	Obadiah Noitte
Robert Carlnton	John Kilgore

Samuel Lancaster	William Cole
William Willis	Ruben Richardson
William Reddock	William Robison
John McDonald	Thomas Turner
Benjamin George	Samuel Pollard
Gregory Obrien	Edward Megee
Samuel Belcher	David Wallis
Phillip Fowler	Jonathan Sawyer
Levi Dublong	Elliott Hasley
Abraham Staples	James Steward
John Buxton	John Digman
Joseph Wadden	James Melony
Israel Sippett	Thomas Davis
Thomas Dove	Richard Geer
Benjamin Trovov (?)	Thomas Brimblecom
Morris Brimblecom	Thomas Homan

Michael Gardner

It will be noticed that among the endorsements on the complete Master Roll herein presented, is the following: "N. B. the sum of £9,18,0, is to be accounted for by Obrien for moneys he has heretofore wrongfully received as by the report of the Committee of both Houses accepted November 18, 1776, appear."

The explanation of this endorsement is as follows: Captain Jeremiah O'Brien had command, for the space of one year and four months, of two privateers-

men—the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent*. He personally commanded the former, while Captain John Lambert commanded the latter; yet Captain O'Brien as Commander-in-Chief was responsible to the State authorities for both vessels and their crews. It will be seen by reference to the copy of the complete Muster Roll of the *Machias Liberty*, appearing in this volume, that men were entering and leaving the service on these vessels very frequently—almost every month, so to speak; the same was probably true of the *Diligent*. Under these circumstances it was scarcely possible that Captain O'Brien knew his men by name, particularly on board the *Diligent*; hence, that some of his men during his sixteen months command of the “flying squadron” should have been represented on the Muster Rolls, made up from time to time, as having served for a less period than was actually the case, is not surprising. The wonder is that concerning two hundred or more men, who from August, 1775, to October, 1776, served at different times on the “flying squadron,” there should not have been made a more serious mistake than that represented by a discrepancy of £9,18,0—about \$48. And when the imperfect facilities and aids for the keeping of a strictly accurate account with his crews is taken into consideration the discrepancy becomes still more insignificant. The fact that Captain O'Brien

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A Muster Roll of the Crew on board the Sloop Machias Liberty. Jeremiah Obrian, Commander

Lately in the Service of the State of Massachusetts Bay, 1776.

MENS' NAMES	RANK	TIME OF ENTRY	TIME of DISCHARGE	TIME IN SERVICE		WAGES PER MONTH			WAGES DUE	MENS' NAMES	RANK	TIME OF ENTRY	TIME of DISCHARGE	TIME IN SERVICE		WAGES PER MONTH			WAGES DUE	
				M	Days															M
Jeremiah Obrian	Commander	February 1st	October 15th	8	14	8	67	14	8	Nathaniel Leach	Seaman	March 1st	October 15th	7	14	2	14	18	8	
William Obrian	1st Lieutenant	"	"	8	14	5	8	45	14	2	Manuel Joseph	"	March 8th	"	7	7	2	14	9	4
William Miller	2d Lieutenant	"	"	8	14	5	"	42	6	8	Obediah Noitte	"	"	June 26th	3	18	2	7	4	4
Arthur Dillaway	Master	March 13th	"	7	2	4	"	28	5	4	Robert Carlnton	"	"	October 16th	7	7	2	14	9	4
Donald McDonald	Surgeon	February 1st	"	8	14	7	"	59	5	4	John Kilgore	"	"	"	7	7	2	14	9	4
Enoch Peirce	Master's Mate	March 9th	"	7	6	3	"	21	12		Samuel Lancaster	"	March 18th	June 24th	3	6	2	6	8	
Thomas Comings	Boatswain	February 1st	"	8	14	3	"	25	8		William Cole	"	March 8th	"	3	16	2	7	1	4
Jacob Hiler	Carpenter	"	"	8	14	3	"	25	8		William Willis	"	March 10th	"	3	14	2	6	18	8
Peter Higgins	Gunner	"	"	8	14	2	8	20	6	2	Ruben Richardson	"	"	July 6th	3	26	2	7	14	8
Dixey Stone	Mate	March 2nd	"	7	13	2	4	16	6	8	William Reddock	"	April 16	October 15th	5	29	2	11	18	8
Samuel Shaw	Steward	February 1st	"	8	14	2	8	20	6	2	William Robison	"	"	June 24th	2	8	2	4	10	8
James Mulvany	Boatsw'n Mate	March 8th	"	7	7	2	4	15	18	1	John McDonald	"	"	"	2	8	2	4	10	8
Seth Harvey	Q. M. and M.A.	February 1st	"	8	14	2	10	21	3	4	Thomas Turner	"	"	"	2	8	2	4	10	8
Daniel Ferril	Carp'ter's Mate	"	"	8	14	2	4	18	12	1	Benjamin George	"	March 13th	October 15th	7	2	2	14	2	8
John Souter	Pilot	March 4th	July 10th	4	6	2	18	12	3	7	Samuel Pollard	"	April 16th	June 24th	2	8	2	4	10	8
William Blake	Quartermaster	February 1st	October 15th	8	14	2	"	16	18	8	Gregory Obrien	"	"	October 15th	5	29	2	11	18	8
John Grimes	Cook	March 13th	July 25th	4	12	2	4	9	16		Edward Megee	"	March 1st	April 15th	1	14	2	2	18	8
Robert Marshall	Drummer	"	"	4	12	2	4	9	16		Samuel Belcher	"	"	July 10th	4	9	2	8	12	
John Wilkes	Seaman	February 1st	October 15th	8	14	2		16	18	8	David Wallis	"	April 16th	October 15th	5	29	2	11	18	8
John Obrian	"	"	March 15th	1	14	2		2	18	8	Phillip Fowler	"	"	July 10th	2	24	2	3	12	
James Cant	"	"	October 15th	8	14	2		16	18	8	Jonathan Sawyer	"	"	October 15th	5	29	2	11	18	8
Samuel Whitney	"	"	"	8	14	2		16	18	8	Levi Dublong	"	March 20th	"	6	25	2	13	13	4
Thomas Doble	"	"	"	8	14	2		16	18	8	Elliott Hasley	"	July 8th	September 26th	2	18	2	5	4	
Isaac Taft	"	"	"	8	14	2		16	18	8	Abraham Staples	"	"	August 1st	0	24	2	1	12	
George Crague	"	"	March 28th	1	27	2		3	16		James Steward	"	"	"	0	24	2	1	12	
William Killley	"	"	May 15th	3	14	2		6	18	8	John Buxton	"	July 4th	October 15th	3	11	2	6	14	8
Joseph Wire	"	March 1st	October 15th	7	14	2		14	18	8	John Digman	"	July 8th	October 8th	3	11	2	6		
Jonathan Woodruff	"	February 1st	April 30th	2	29	2		5	18	8	Joseph Wadden	"	"	August 1st	1	24	2	1	12	
Caleb Boynton	"	"	June 26th	4	25	2		9	13	4	James Melony	"	"	"		24	2	1	12	
William East	"	March 23rd	"	3	3	2		6	4		Israel Sippett	"	"	September 26th	2	18	2	5	4	
Manuel Saunders	"	March 13th	October 15th	7	2	2		14	2	8	Thomas Davis	"	August 1st	October 5th	2	14	2	4	18	8
William Hancock	"	"	September 26th	6	13	2		12	17	4	Thomas Dove	"	"	"	2	14	2	4	18	8
Daniel Bean	"	March 1st	July 20th	4	19	2		9	5	4	Richard Geer	"	"	"	2	14	2	4	18	8
Joseph Hilbert	"	July 8th	October 15th	3	7	2		6	9	4	Benjamin Trovov [?]	"	"	"	2	14	2	4	18	8
James Langford	"	July 8th	October 15th	3	7	2		6	9	4	Thomas Brimblecom	"	"	"	2	14	2	4	18	8
Thomas Newman	"	"	August 1st	3	24	2		1	12		Morriss Brimblecom	"	"	"	2	14	2	4	18	8
Francis Anthony	"	"	October 15th	3	7	2		6	9	4	Thomas Homan	"	"	"	2	14	2	4	18	8
Nicholas Hye	"	"	"	3	7	2		6	9	4	Michael Gardner	"	"	"	2	14	2	4	18	8
James Wheeler	"	February 1st	"	8	14	2		16	18	8										

Carried forward, £692 15 7

£273 9 15

Copy. State of Massachusetts Bay, October 30, 1776.
 Cap't. Jeremiah Obrian above named made solemn oath to ye truth of the above Roll by him Subscribed, according to the best of his knowledge.
 Before Samuel Holten [?]
 Jus. Peace throughout ye State.

Supre. Cr. By cash supplied by
 Messrs. Jackson, Tracey & Tracey } £ 21 0
 Balance due to Jeremiah Obrien, } 945 4 11
 Brought forward, } £273 9 4
 £966 4 11 }
 £692 15 7 }
 £966 4 11 }

Balance carried over—

JEREMIAH OBRIEN.

Muster Roll of the Sloop Machias Liberty continued—

	Balance brought forward	£945 4 11
Samuel Blake, Master, Entered February 1 and discharged } March 13, 1776—is 1 mon: 15 days	}	5 12
		950 16 11
N. B. the Sum of £9 18 0 is to be accounted for by Orbion } for moneys he has heretofore wrongfully received as by the re- port of the Committee of both Houses accepted Nov. 18, 1776. } appear	}	9 18
		£940 18 11

In Council November 19, 1776

Read and allowed and Ordered that a Warrant be drawn on the Treasury for £940 18 11 in full of the Balance due on this Roll.

John Avery, Deputy Secretary.

T. Davis
Captain Jeremiah Obrian
Roll of the Sloop Machias
Liberty.

Examined and find due £940 18 11
October 30, 1776.
Seth Loring, Clerk to Committee.

October 30th, 1776, Examined and
due on this Roll £940 18 11
Nathaniel Bayley, per order

Thomas Davis

received from the Council of the State of Massachusetts no reprimand, nor a single word of disapproval in connection with his discharge from the State service, is conclusive proof that the State authorities considered that his mistake was, under the circumstances, unavoidable. And when it is remembered, as our readers will in due time learn, that he was subsequently several times re-commissioned as a privateer commander by the State of Massachusetts, it will be seen that Captain Jeremiah O'Brien came out of the Colony naval service without even the smell of smoke upon the fair garment of his reputation for uprightness and honor.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE IN THE HAZEN CASE.

“The Committee of both Houses to whom was referred sundry petitions relating to Captain Jeremiah Obrian and Captain Lambert and several charges and accusations against Captain Obrian have attended to that service and examined divers evidences produced and ask leave to report as follows:

That with respect to the demand of William Hazen for damages and detention of his vessel your Committee are of opinion that the said Obrian taking the Schooner *Polley* and bringing her into port may be justified as there was sufficient reason for his suspicion of her going to supply the enemy, that therefore he is not entitled to any damage for the detention.



STONES FROM THE BALLAST OF THE "MARGARETTA"

These stones were procured by the author of this volume of the librarian of the Porter Memorial Library of Machias, Me., while on a visit to that place in the summer of the year 1900. One of the stones above shown (the one farthest to the left) is now on exhibition at the famous Washington Headquarters in Morristown, N. J., the author having presented it to the Washington Association in the spring of the year 1902. The stone ballast of the "Margaretta" may have been brought over from England, or it may have been procured in Nova Scotia. Many of these stones are built into the large fire-place in one of the handsome rooms of the Porter Memorial Library. See page 80.

ury of this State to William Hazen the sum of Seven Pounds, Three Shillings and Ten Pence in full for the balance of what was taken out of the Schooner *Polley* by Captain Obrian and Captain Lambert.

Read and accepted.

Sent up for concurrence.



CHAPTER X.

CAPTAIN JEREMIAH O'BRIEN SERVES ON
SEA AND LAND.

Captain O'Brien Cruises in the *Resolution*—Makes Important Captures—Interesting Memoranda—Aids a Wounded Seaman—Commands the *Cyrus*, the *Little Vincent* and the *Tiger*—Returns to Machias—Joins the Free Masons—Appointed Captain of the *Rangers*—Attends an Indian Conference—Captain O'Brien Cruises in the *Hannibal*—Chased by British Frigates—Overtaken and Captured—Confined on Prison Ship *Jersey*—Transferred to Mill Prison, England—Escapes from English Prison—Returns to Machias.

"Let not one look of fortune cast you down;
She were not fortune if she did not frown;
Such as do braveliest bear her scorns awhile,
Are those on whom at last she most will smile."
—*Earl of Orrery*

"The first sure symptoms of a mind in health,
Is rest of heart, and pleasure felt at home."—*Young*.

"We cannot be more faithful to ourselves
In anything that's manly, than to make
Ill fortune as contemptible to us,
As it makes us to others."—*Beaumont and Fletcher*.

"The debt immense of endless gratitude."—*Milton*.

THE "flying squadron," comprising the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent*, was, as may be seen by reference to the preceding chapter, put out of commission about the middle of October, 1776, after having been employed in the Massachusetts Colony

service for a period of sixteen months; and their officers and crews were discharged.

The number of American private vessels engaged in preying upon British commerce had increased to such large proportions, and the wages paid by their owners to seamen were so liberal, that privateering under the authority of the Massachusetts Colony seems to have become a comparatively profitless occupation.

It was in the latter part of the summer of 1777, that Captain O'Brien was commissioned by the State of Massachusetts as commander of the privateer *Resolution*, a brig, owned and fitted out by Daniel Martin and others associated with him, at Newburyport. The following document will corroborate the above statement, and also furnish some facts of more than ordinary interest concerning the subject of this biography:

“ TO THE HONORABLE THE COUNCIL OF THE STATE
OF MASSACHUSETTS:

The Petition of Daniel Martin for himself and in the behalf of the owners of the Schooner *Resolution*,

Humbly Sheweth,

That they have fitted out the said Schooner as a private vessel of war to cruise against the enemies of the United States of America,

she being burthened about thirty-five tons, to carry ten swivel guns and about twenty-five men, whereof Jeremiah Obrian is commander. He therefore humbly prays your Honors would be pleased to grant a commission to the said Captain Obrian, to the command of the said schooner.

And as in duty bound shall ever pray.

DANIEL MARTIN.

Boston, August 12th, 1777.

Provisions:

8 Bbl. Beef and Pork,
13° Bread—with Flour,
100° Powder c.

In Council August 13, 1777—Read and ordered that the prayer of the above petition be granted and that a commission be issued to the above-mentioned Jeremiah Obrian as Commander of said Schooner; he complying with the Resolve of Congress.

JNO. AVERY, Dep. Sec.”

The commission of Captain O'Brien as commander of the *Resolution* can be regarded in no other light than as a mark of confidence, on the part of the State authorities, in his ability and integrity.

As to the career of Captain O'Brien while in command of the *Resolution* the author offers the following information:

In a private journal kept by Colonel John Allan, in command during the year 1777 of the Indian De-

partment in eastern Maine, which included Machias, we find the following entries which throw some light upon the whereabouts of Captain O'Brien during the period in question. Under date of September 6 (Saturday) 1777, is found the following memorandum: "A privateer commanded by Captain Jerry O'Brien arrived here; (at Machias) brought some papers (from Boston?) none of very late date; also a letter giving information that a gentleman escaped from the enemy off Cape Sables, a few days ago; that a reinforcement of four hundred men"—the sentence breaks off abruptly at this point, the remainder of the entry under head of the above date having disappeared from the journal.

Under the date of September 29, (Monday) 1777, is the following entry in Colonel Allan's journal: "Captain Jerry O'Brien came in from a cruise. He took a prize (the *Scarborough*) off Cape Negro, which had been taken coming from Ireland loaded with pork by some of our privateers, and was retaken by the (British ship) *Scarborough*; she had 4 carriage guns and two—besides swivels. She went to the westward. The mate of the *Scarborough*, who was prize master, is on board O'Brien's privateer."

It is recorded that on Wednesday, October 1, 1777, Captain O'Brien sailed from Machias for Boston, carrying a letter from Colonel Allan to the General Court of the State of Massachusetts.

It was during Captain O'Brien's service on the privateer *Resolution*, that, while stopping temporarily in Boston, he affixed his signature to a document of great interest; in explanation of which it will be necessary to take a backward look. On board the American Sloop *Unity* when she engaged with and captured the British armed vessel *Margaretta* in Machias Bay in the month of June, 1775, was a young married man named Isaac Taft. In the thick of the fight he was wounded in the thigh by a hand-grenade thrown by Captain Moore, the British commander, from his vessel on to the deck of the *Unity*. Taft was laid up for nearly a year, so completely disabled as to be incapacitated for the support of his family. He had some months afterward made application to the Colonial authorities for a pension, and very naturally he sought the assistance of Captain O'Brien, as the officer who was in command of the *Unity* at the time he was wounded; whom he desired to certify to the facts stated in his application. This assistance Captain O'Brien, true to the generosity of his nature, was only too glad to render on behalf of a meritorious seaman whose bravery in battle he had personally witnessed. Following is a copy, *verbatim*, of the certificate given by Captain O'Brien:

~~Boston~~ 21 Feb 1777 This may certify ~~that~~ Isaac Swift was wounded & took
One of 4 things ^{Co. of 4 companies} Sunders at Machias the Eleventh day of June 1775 in the Floe.
Unity under my Command, and lay wounded and not fit for duty about ten
months.

Jeremiah Borer

“ BOSTON, 21, February (Friday) 1777.

This may certify that Isaac Taft was wounded taking one of ye King's tenders called ye *Margairitta* at Machias the eleventh day of June, 1775, in the Sloop *Unity* under my command and lay wounded and not fit for duty about ten months.

JEREMIAH OBRIEN.”

In this volume will be found a *fac-simile* of the above certificate given by Captain O'Brien, made from a tracing by the author, of the original document, showing the brave officer's own neat handwriting, *slightly reduced*; it cannot fail to be of deep interest to our readers.

A similar certificate to the one given by Captain O'Brien was also furnished by Dr. William Chaloner, the surgeon who attended Isaac Taft during his disability from the wound received on board the *Unity*; this certificate which was given about nine months previous to that of Captain O'Brien, is also presented:

“ MACHIAS, April 12th, (Friday) 1776.

This may certify all whom it may concern that Isaac Taft was wounded on the *12th of June, 1775*, by a hand-grande thro. the thigh in taking his Majesty's armed Schooner *Marguiretta*, James Moore commander. Said Taft behaved himself like a man of courage and resolution thro. the whole battle and after he was wounded, and has not been capa-

ble of getting his living since, as witness my hand,
WILLIAM CHALONER, Surgeon."

A *fac-simile* of Dr. Chaloner's certificate, made from a tracing of the author, from the original document, may also be found in this volume; in this *fac-simile* there is no reduction in the size of the surgeon's handwriting.

The reader will notice that both Captain O'Brien and Dr. Chaloner casually mention in the certificate given by them that the naval engagement between the American Sloop *Unity* and the British armed vessel *Margaretta* occurred in the month of June, 1775; Dr. Chaloner stating that it was on the 12th, and Captain O'Brien stating that it was on the 11th, of that month. As a matter of fact this engagement occurred on the 12th of June, as Dr. Chaloner unqualifiedly states; and that Captain O'Brien should have made a mistake of a single day in the certificate is not surprising, since it was presumably drawn up, and certainly signed by him, nearly two years subsequent to the event referred to, and while he was absent from home and undoubtedly without the memoranda needed to refresh his memory as to dates. That so many writers, among them several reputable historians, should have, without modification, stated that the naval engagement between the *Unity* and the *Margaretta* occurred on the 12th of May, is sur-

Nachias April 12th 1776

This may certify all whom it may concern that Isaac
Taft was wounded (on the 12th June 1775) by a hand Grenade
thro the thigh in taking His Majesty's Armed Schooner
Marguieretta James Moore commander of Taft behaved
himself like a man of courage & Resolution thro the
whole Battle & after he was wounded and has not been
capable of getting his living since as Witness my
Hand

William Maloney Surgeon

Machias April 13. 1776

This may certify all whom it may concern that I was
Safely wounded on the 13th June 1775 by a hand Grenade
thru the leg in taking the May 25th Armed Schooner
Margueritta James Moore communder for safe be had
himself like a man of courage & resolution thru the
whole Battle & after he was wounded and has not been
capable of getting his living twice as witness my
Hand

William Malcom Surgeon

prising, to say the least, since by reference to original sources of information the exact date of the occurrence could have been ascertained.

We next find Captain O'Brien in command, successively, of the privateers *Cyrus*, *Little Vincent* and *Tiger*. The *Cyrus* was a ship carrying 12 guns and manned by a crew of forty-five seamen, including officers; she sailed from Massachusetts. The *Little Vincent* carried 10 guns and a crew of sixteen men, and sailed from the same State. The *Tiger* was a schooner and carried 6 guns and a crew of fifteen men; she sailed from the State of New Hampshire.

As to the results of the cruises of Captain O'Brien in the three privateers just mentioned the author is unable to make any reliable statement, since, so far as he is at present aware, there is no record of their captures available. The fact is, the record of captures made during the War of the Revolution, as kept by the privateer commanders, and even by the State authorities themselves, was so incomplete, that it is probably impossible at this late day to ascertain with any exactness the number of British vessels that fell into our hands; but of this we may be certain, the number greatly exceeded that of any record ever kept, or of any record now extant.

As nearly as can now be ascertained it was prob-

ably some time during the latter part of the year 1778, or the early part of the year 1779, that Captain O'Brien completed his cruises in the *Cyrus*, the *Little Vincent* and the *Tiger*; and again he returns to Machias; for

“Such is the patriot's boast, where'er we roam,
His first, best country ever is at home.”—*Goldsmith*.

It was while Captain O'Brien was at home that Warren Lodge, F. A. M., (now of East Machias,) was organized at Machias; and of this lodge, the second to be instituted in what is now the State of Maine, he was one of the charter members, and was elected to the office of Junior Deacon. The first meeting of this lodge was held in Job Burnham's Tavern, in Machias, on (Monday) the 10th of May, 1779.

During his temporary sojourn at home Captain O'Brien was by no means idle, as the following memorandum in Colonel John Allan's Journal proves: “June 23, (Wednesday) 1779; I appointed Captain Jeremiah O'Brien Captain of the Ranging Company and to raise men immediately, agreeable to a resolve of the General Court the 20th of April last. These I propose keeping at Machias.”

It is probable that the company of Rangers commanded by Captain O'Brien was employed as a means of protection against unfriendly Indians in command of the noted Major Rogers, concerning whom we find

the following statement in the annals of a local historian.* "Great pains were taken by the enemy to bring the Indians upon us, and in the fall of the year 1779 the noted Major Rogers was actually sent through by the way of St. John to Canada to bring a body of Indians against us early in the Spring, and they came a part of the way, as we were afterwards informed, until the Indians belonging to St. Johns river met them and persuaded them to return, by telling them that the French and we were brethren, and that to fight against us would be to fight against their father the French King, but as we had early intelligence of the business that Rogers was upon we really expected him and was at the expense of keeping Scouts up the river to discover the enemy if he approached."

The necessity for the employment of the Machias Rangers having ceased they, with their commanding officer, Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, were, on Monday, the 15th, of November, 1779, discharged from service. Hence the following entry in Colonel Allan's Journal under date of (Thursday) November 18, 1778: "I have dismissed Captain O'Brien."

In an account of a Conference held by the Americans and Indians on (Thursday) the 18th of Novem-

* William Bartlett Smith in "Historical Sketch of Machias."

ber, 1779, the name of Captain O'Brien with those of several other citizens of Machias appears as having been present. Following is the record of the Conference:

“ CONFERENCE WITH THE INDIANS.

At a Conference held at Machias the 18th day of November, 1779, with a large number of Indians of the St. Johns and Passamaquoddy Tribes, with several from St. Francis in Canada and other tribes, Present:

Colo. Allan, Supr. Int.

Lieut, Avery, Sec'y to do,

Lieut. Delesdernier A. D. C. to do,

Stephen Jones

Mr. O'Brien

Mr. Longfellow

} Inhabitants
of
Machias

In the service at
Machias. {
Major Stillman
Capt. Smith, Com'y
CAPT. O'BRIEN
Lieut. Albee
Lieut. Ferree
Doctor Clark
Quar. Mas'r. Foster
Pierre Paul, Interpreter
Pierre Tomma, Chief of St. Johns

Mr. S. Archabad

Mr. T. Archabad

Mr. J. Achabad

Capt. Somers of

Cape Ann

} From
Nova Scotia

‘ Brother:

By the grace of the Almighty, who conducts all his

people, we are permitted to meet together at this place where we formerly did, and by the continuance of his goodness I hope we shall be prospered in all our undertakings. The old men, the sachems the captains and the young men salute all the officers and gentlemen here present as well as all the rest of the Americans ' " * * * * *

It was during the year 1780 that John O'Brien and Joseph O'Brien, two younger brothers of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, and a few others associated with them, built at Newburyport a vessel intended for the privateer service. She was named the *Hannibal*. Her armament consisted of 24 guns, and she was to carry a crew of one hundred and thirty men. On her first cruise to Port au Prince the *Hannibal* was commanded by John O'Brien. During this cruise he captured several important prizes. Upon the return of the *Hannibal* to Newburyport it was arranged that on her next cruise Captain Jeremiah O'Brien should assume the command of her; and Captain John O'Brien, therefore, petitioned the Honorable Council of the General Court of Massachusetts requesting that Jeremiah O'Brien be regularly commissioned as her commander. This petition, with the Resolution of the Massachusetts Council granting it, are both herewith presented :

“To the Honorable Council of the State of Massachusetts Bay:

The Petition of John Obrian of Newburyport,
Humbly Sheweth,

That your Petitioner with others have fitted for sea the ship *Hannibal* burthened about two hundred and fifty tons, mounting twenty-four carriage guns and navigated by one hundred and thirty men, having on board as provisions one hundred barrels of beef and pork and six ton of bread. As ammunition 2,500 weight of powder, and shot in proportion. Said ship is intended to cruise against the enemies of the United States.

Your Petitioner therefore humbly prays your honors to commission Jeremiah O'brian as commander of said ship for the purpose aforesaid, and likewise to direct the naval officer of Marblehead to clear out said ship for sea. And your Petitioner as in duty bound will pray.

JOHN O BRIEN.

Boston, September 8, 1780.

In Council, September 8, 1780, Read and ordered that Jeremiah O'Brian, be commissioned as Commander of the ship aboved-mentioned, he complying with the Resolves of Congress.

JNO. AVERY, D. Sec.”

In speaking of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien's ser-

vice on the *Hannibal* a recent writer* says: "Meeting with varied success in a cruise of considerable length" * * * * *

While cruising off New York harbor the *Hannibal* fell in with a fleet of British merchantmen under convoy of several British frigates. Upon sighting the *Hannibal* two of the British frigates at once started in pursuit of her. Captain O'Brien and his officers recognizing the futility of engaging with two vessels superior to their own, turned their vessel's stern upon them. It may also have been the hope of Captain O'Brien, in running from these frigates, to separate them, and by attacking them one by one, to overcome them. But if this was his desire, he did not succeed, for the frigates did not part company. After an exciting chase of forty-eight hours the British frigates overtook and captured the *Hannibal*. Captain O'Brien related, during the closing years of his life, that when the ranking British officer of the two frigates came on board the *Hannibal* to arrange for the surrender, and, in accordance with the rules of warfare, to receive his sword, he good-naturedly tapped him on the shoulder, at the same time remarking: "Well, Captain, it is your turn (to surrender) to-day, but it may be mine to-morrow." In explanation of the British officer's remark it may be

* Edgar S. Maclay in "History of American Privateers."

said that it was no infrequent occurrence during the War of the Revolution for the captor of an American armed vessel to be himself captured before reaching safe port with his prize, and *vice-versa*. As an illustration of this statement the following instance may be cited: On the 13th of July, 1776, the American vessel *Wild Cat* captured the British Schooner *Egmont*, which was in charge of a Lieutenant of the Royal navy; on the day following, July 14th, the *Wild Cat* was captured by the British frigate *Surprise*.

It was in the summer of the year 1776 that the British forces took possession of New York. After her capture the *Hannibal* was taken into that city. Captain O'Brien and his officers and crew were at once placed on board the prison-ship *Jersey*, which was one of several British prison-ships which at different times lay in Wallabout Bay, where the present Brooklyn navy yard is. These prison-ships were the decaying hulks of unseaworthy vessels, and, as might naturally be supposed were extremely unhealthful. With regard to the food furnished the prisoners on board the British prison-ships, an American officer* confined on one of them in the year 1782, says: "Each prisoner was furnished in *quantity*† with

* Captain Thomas Drink.

† The Italics are Captain Drink's.

two-thirds of the allowance of a seaman of the British navy, which was as follows:

“ On Sunday, 1 lb. of biscuit, 1 lb. of pork, and half a pint of peas.

On Monday, 1 lb. of biscuit, 1 pint of oatmeal, 2 ozs. of butter.

On Tuesday, 1 lb. of biscuit, and two lbs. of beef.

On Wednesday, 1½ lbs. of flour, and two ounces of suet.

On Thursday, The same as Sunday.

On Friday, “ “ “ Monday.

On Saturday, “ “ “ Tuesday.

What with foul air, insufficient and unwholesome food, filth, and their inevitable effect, despondency, diseases of the most malignant nature were generated; the unhappy victims perished by scores, and their bodies were buried in shallow graves on the shores of the Wallabout. The names of eight thousand American seamen confined during the War of the Revolution, on board the prison ship *Jersey* alone, (and this list is far from complete) have been discovered after long research, and may now be seen at the headquarters of the Long Island Historical Society, in Brooklyn, N. Y. The name of Jeremiah O'Brien does not appear on this list, which is accounted for by the fact of the incompleteness of the list as above-mentioned.

Of the names of those who perished on board the

eight or ten other British prison-ships in Wallabout Bay, no record is known to exist. Such were the sufferings of the seamen confined on these "floating hells," that near the close of the year 1779, they deliberately set fire to two of them, in the hope of finding either freedom or death. It is a fact which deserves emphasis, that the British officers were persistent in their endeavor to persuade the American seamen confined on these prison-ships to enlist in the King's service, that by so doing they might secure deliverance from their sufferings. But despite the facts that many of these prisoners had families who were suffering because of their absence; that it was almost certain death to remain on board, they were faithful to the cause of Freedom in which they had embarked, preferring even a horrible death to dishonor. At length the indignation of the United States Congress was thoroughly aroused, and it found fitting expression in the following language to be seen in a letter from Washington to Lord Howe: "I am sorry that I am under the disagreeable necessity of troubling your lordship with a letter, almost wholly on the subject of the cruel treatment which our officers and men in the naval department who are unhappy enough to fall into your hands receive on board the prison-ships in the harbor of New York."*

* "Irving's Washington."



MODEL OF THE AMERICAN SLOOP "UNITY"

The above picture was made from a photograph furnished by Mrs. Mary O'Brien Brown, of Machias, Me., a lineal descendant of Gideon O'Brien, the eldest brother of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien. The model of the "Unity" was made by the late James H. Robbins, M. D., of Machias, and was used for the first time in connection with the celebration of the first centennial anniversary (1863) of the settlement of Machias. On the occasion of the 125th anniversary (1888) of the settlement of Machias the model was again used. It is considered an accurate representation of the vessels of the Colonial period. The model, which is 6 feet in length, is kept in the Court House, at Machias. It has been used in several celebrations besides those above mentioned.

At the close of about six months' confinement on board the prison-ship *Jersey*, the crew of the *Hannibal*, and most of the American naval officers there incarcerated were exchanged; but, acting upon instructions from the British government Captain O'Brien was reserved for special punishment, and was therefore transported to England for further confinement. This was ordered in retaliation upon Captain O'Brien for the active part he had borne in the operations against the British naval and military forces at Machias and vicinity, in the early part of the War of the Revolution; and for the serious damage he had inflicted upon British commerce while he was engaged in privateering. The facts that Captain O'Brien was of Irish descent, and that his father, according to tradition, was obliged to flee his native land in consequence of some political offence against the British government, may also have been among the reasons for the special punishment meted out to him. It seems to have been about the month of July, 1781, that Captain O'Brien was transported to Plymouth, England, situated, as the maps show, on the southwestern coast of that country, and there incarcerated in the famous Mill Prison. "Mill Prison was a massive stone building in the center of an extensive court. The court was surrounded by a high wall, and twenty feet beyond that was another wall, par-

allel to the first, completely surrounding it. The only apertures in these walls were a gate in each, the inner one being formed with massive iron bars eight feet high. The outer gate during the day usually was left open so as to allow free communication between the keepers and their dwellings which were placed just outside the outer wall. Between eight o'clock in the morning and sunset the prisoners were allowed the privilege of the inner court, but at night they were securely locked in the prison house. Many sentinels were stationed among the prisoners in the inner court and in the prison itself, besides the regular patrols on the two encircling walls and at the gates. To the unfortunate Americans who had just arrived from the *Yarmouth* this place seemed a paradise, for at Mill Prison they could at least get light, air and exercise. Yet even here there were many causes for complaint, for the American prisoners seem to have been picked out for severe treatment. It was shown that they were treated with less humanity than the French and Spaniards, * * * they had not a sufficient allowance of bread, and were very scantily furnished with clothing.'"* "Our allowance here in prison is a pound of bread, a quarter of a pound of beef, a pound of greens, a quart of

* "A History of American Privateers," by Edgar S. Maclay.

beer and a little pot-liquor that the beef and greens are boiled in without any thickening—per day.”†

During his confinement in Mill Prison Captain O'Brien, beside suffering the usual hardships of prison life, was made the object of repeated personal indignities from the prison officials, who had probably been instructed to thus vent their special spite upon him in the way of retaliation. To a man of Captain O'Brien's high spirit this treatment was most exasperating; and only his absolute helplessness in the clutch of his merciless enemies, and his sense of prudence, deterred him from personal retaliation on the spot. Doubtless his greatly emaciated condition, induced by long confinement and inhuman treatment, may account in large measure for the fact that Captain O'Brien did not return fire for fire. It is not surprising, that after his return to America, he abhorred the ground on which an Englishman had trod. Just how long Captain O'Brien was incarcerated in Mill Prison cannot now be accurately stated. By some authors he is said to have been imprisoned there for a period of two years; by others for one and a half years. It is, however, the opinion of the author that he was confined in Mill Prison for a little more than a year—perhaps eighteen months—and this opinion is based upon

† Charles Herbert, of Newburyport, Mass., a prisoner taken December, 1776, and confined in Mill Prison.

the following facts: 1st, that according to the best available data Captain O'Brien was captured off New York harbor either late in the year 1780 or early in the year 1781; 2d, that he was confined on the prison ship *Jersey* as nearly as can be ascertained (indeed, nearly all writers are agreed on this) about six months, according to which he was transported to England about the month of June or July of the year 1781; and 3d, that in October of the year 1782 we find him in Machias, Maine, which latter statement we are able to corroborate by the fact of his having at that place signed a document, bearing the date of October 1, 1782,—being an acknowledgment of a receipt in full of all claims upon the State of Massachusetts for services rendered by the Schooner *Diligent* and her crew in the War of the Revolution; of which document a copy appears in this volume.

So desirous were the British authorities of retaining Captain O'Brien in custody in Mill Prison that extra precautions were taken to prevent his escape; but despite these precautions he did, as we shall see, shake the dust of his feet from that dismal dungeon. It happened on this wise:—For several weeks prior to his escape Captain O'Brien purposely neglected his person and his dress. He allowed his hair to lengthen and his beard to grow, (he was probably beardless when captured) which materially altered

his appearance. In the meantime he had arranged with his French washwoman, who was accustomed to bringing clothing to the prisoners, to bring him before the day fixed upon for his escape, a suit of clothing. For this service Captain O'Brien, as he related in the closing years of his life, gave the washwoman the last money he had in his pocket—a guinea. He also arranged with the washwoman to have her husband furnish a small boat—a row boat—in which he was to convey Captain O'Brien across to France. This boat was to be awaiting him on his arrival outside the prison-walls. On the morning of his escape Captain O'Brien shaved and suitably arranged his hair; he donned the suit of clothing furnished by the faithful French washwoman, and at the usual hour—about 8 o'clock A. M.—accompanied the other prisoners out into the prison-yard for fresh air and exercise. During the day he secreted himself under a platform in the prison yard; and when in the early evening the prisoners were “rounded up” preparatory to being marched back to their quarters, he did not return with them. Waiting for night to settle down upon the scene he walked leisurely, but with great inward trepidation, out of the prison-yard, passing through, from necessity, the principal keeper's house, (by whom he was taken for a British soldier) where he lingered a few moments, on his way to freedom.

Captain John O'Brien says he "made a little stay in the bar-room of the house." On reaching the outside world he met two other escaping American officers, one of whom was a Captain Lyon. Entering the boat which was in readiness for Captain O'Brien, these three American officers were rowed down the river, and across the English Channel to France, a distance of about one hundred and twenty miles; thinking if not in rhyme, in prose, as the frail boat, propelled by the deft hands of the active Frenchman, rose and fell in the surging waters of the sea, —

"A prison! heav'ns, I loath the hated name,
Famine's metropolis, the sink of shame,
A nauseous sepulchre, whose craving womb
Hourly inters poor mortals in the tomb;
By ev'ry plague and ev'ry ill possessed,
Ev'n purgatory itself to thee 's a jest."*

Captain O'Brien, after his return to America related that as he and the other American officers were being rowed (the author is of the opinion that such was their haste to reach friendly soil, that they each in turn assisted the Frenchman) down the river and out into the English Channel in the silence of that eventful evening, they could distinctly hear the sound of the measured tread of the English sentinels on shore as they walked back and forth on their prescribed beat. Captain O'Brien, in relating that part of his experiences in connection with his escape, remark-

* Tom Brown.

ed, that he could even hear "the sentinel's whistle" as he sought to while the weary hours away. Colonel O'Brien, for so he was for several years prior to his decease called, also remarked, when in reminiscent mood he recalled the circumstances of his escape from Mill Prison: "In France we found the people friendly; they aided me with money. We were the recipients of much attention while in France, and on the way home to New York."

In due time Captain O'Brien reached his native land and was royally welcomed by the citizens of Machias. It is stated by at least one writer that on his return to America Captain O'Brien took up his residence at Brunswick, Maine; concerning which the author begs to say that he may have gone directly to Brunswick on his arrival in his native land, where he may have spent a few days with his brother, Captain John O'Brien, whom it is natural to suppose he would be specially desirous of meeting, that he might explain to him the particulars of the capture of the *Hannibal*, of which Captain John O'Brien owned a large share. But Captain Jeremiah O'Brien's stay in Brunswick was brief, and he soon returned once more to the town where all his worldly interests were centered—Machias, where he resided until his decease.

Captain O'Brien probably reached Machias some-

time in the summer or early autumn of the year 1782; for in the month of October of that year, he signed the following document:

“This may certify that the Schooner *Diligent* of one hundred tons burthen with her appurtenances fit for sea, mounting eight carriage and twenty swivel guns, belonging to the inhabitants of Machias was taken into the service of the (then) Colony of Massachusetts Bay and commissioned under my command and cruised against the enemies of the United States from August 1st, 1775 to October 20th, 1776, when she was discharged and the men paid off by order of the General Assembly.

Dated at Machias, JEREMIAH O'BRIEN.”

October 1st, 1782.

The surrender of Lord Cornwallis, the British commander, at Yorktown, Virginia, on the 19th of October, 1781, virtually terminated the War of American Revolution, although a few engagements of insignificant character subsequently occurred.

Early in the Spring of the year 1782, negotiations for the restoration of peace were commenced; and on the 3d of September, 1783, the final treaty of peace was signed in Paris, by commissioners assembled there from both countries. The American Colonies, after a seven years' war of almost unparalleled hardships and sufferings had achieved their freedom, and

by the treaty of Paris became one of the independent and sovereign nations of the earth.

The importance of the naval services rendered to the American Colonies, and to the cause of Freedom, by Captain Jeremiah O'Brien and others engaged in privateering during the War of the Revolution may, in a general way at least, be inferred from the following statement: At the opening of the war the commercial navy of Great Britain comprised about 7,000 vessels; before the close of the year 1782 the American privateers had captured nearly one-third of these; and of these 2,300 and odd vessels captured, more than 1,200, escaping re-capture by the enemy, arrived in safe port. The pecuniary value of the captures made by American privateers in the War of the Revolution has been variously estimated at from ten to fifteen millions of dollars; while the embarrassment to the British military forces operating in the Colonies, in consequence of the serious interference with their food and ammunition supplies cannot, in the nature of the case, be estimated in figures. It was believed that 70,000 New England privateersmen were afloat at one time during the Seven Years' Struggle for Independence. Hence the damage inflicted upon British shipping must have been very great, and the consequent embarrassment to the British armies operating on American soil, was, without

doubt, of the most serious character, and this embarrassment contributed in no small measure to the ultimate achievement of the independence of the American colonies.

The first vessel commissioned (August 23, 1775) by the American Colonies for the privateer service in the War of the Revolution was the confiscated Sloop *Unity*, afterward re-named the *Machias Liberty*, and commanded for nearly sixteen months by Captain Jeremiah O'Brien; and this vessel was commissioned and employed by the Legislature of Massachusetts. In this same vessel while it still bore the name *Unity*, Captain Jeremiah O'Brien had fought the first naval battle (June 12, 1775) and won the first victory of the War of the Revolution, resulting in the capture of the British armed vessel *Margaretta*; and for Captain O'Brien it is no ordinary honor that with his own hands he hauled down the ensign from this captured vessel, this being the first British flag to be lowered by an American in the war culminating in our national independence.

In the *Machias Liberty*, Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, acting under instructions from the Machias Committee of Safety, subsequently cruised during the latter part of June and the early part of July, 1775, in the Bay of Fundy in search of the enemy's vessels, and he was thus the commander of the first Ameri-

can armed cruiser of the War of the Revolution. It is also a fact which deserves special emphasis that the *Machias Liberty* constituted the nucleus of the present navy of the United States, which at the present time is second to none in *personnel* and efficiency in the world. On the 12th of July, 1775, Captain Jeremiah O'Brien in command of the *Machias Liberty*, assisted by a small vessel from East Machias, captured the British armed cruiser *Diligent* and her tender, the *Tapnaquish*, in Machias Bay, and took them in triumph to Machias. The news of these truly brilliant naval victories sent a thrill of enthusiasm throughout the American Colonies, and awakened in many hearts the ambition to emulate the heroic achievements of Captain O'Brien and his brave crews. The impetus to naval warfare in the United States thus given by Captain O'Brien's highly successful efforts in Machias Bay was of so marked character, that had his services to the Colonies ended with those brilliant achievements he would be entitled to the enduring gratitude of the American people.

Captain O'Brien was soon (August 23, 1775*) appointed by the Provincial Congress of Massachusetts

* Captain O'Brien, in a document under date of October 1, 1782, speaks of having cruised under commission from the Massachusetts Colony "from August 1st, 1775, to October 20th, 1776."

Commander-in-Chief of the *Machias Liberty* and the *Diligent*, and with these vessels, fitted out under his personal supervision in Machias, he was employed by the above-mentioned body to cruise against the enemy's vessels along the coast of New England, which he did from the latter part of August, 1775, until the middle of October, 1776, a period of about sixteen months; he was thus the commander of the first American naval "flying squadron" of the War of the Revolution. This "flying squadron" comprised a sloop of about 80 tons, and a schooner of about 100 tons, burthen; their armament consisted respectively of five guns and ten swivels and eight guns and twenty swivels, with crews of forty men each. With an insufficiency of ammunition; with poorly-fed and scantily clothed crews; with growing discontent amongst his men, owing to their meagre and irregularly paid wages—discontent that at times almost reached the point of mutiny; engaged in what may properly be termed pioneer naval work; harrassed by the thought of tory influence being exerted against him from his home; with a sea coast of 500 miles at least to patrol; in the face of the racial prejudice of his times,—Captain Jeremiah O'Brien achieved marked success as a privateer,—capturing many British prizes—thus rendering services to the Massachusetts Colony and to the cause of Freedom which can

scarcely be computed, and for which he has not, heretofore, received due credit.

In estimating the value of Captain O'Brien's services to the American Colonies it should also be remembered that to him, and to his compatriots in Machias, is due the credit of having held for New England the entire portion of what is now the State of Maine lying eastward of the Penobscot river, with its sea coast of one hundred miles, and its pine forests of incalculable worth; and in the accomplishment of this important end Captain O'Brien and the people of those extreme frontier settlements endured hardships and sufferings, and exhibited traits of sturdy manhood, which should command the admiration and gratitude of all patriotic Americans.

After Captain O'Brien's discharge from the Massachusetts Colony service he commanded successively the privateers *Resolution*, *Cyrus*, *Tiger* and *Little Vincent*, each of which was owned and fitted out and kept on the seas by private individuals. The series of cruises in these privateers ending, Captain O'Brien returned to Machias. During his temporary sojourn at home he rendered excellent service to the cause of Freedom as Captain of a company of Rangers, who seem to have been employed as a means of defense against unfriendly Indians whose hostile intent had been inspired by British machinations. Cap-

tain O'Brien's military services being no longer needed in Machias, his fondness for the water again asserted itself; he could not be content to "praise the sea, and keep on land." Beside, his country's independence was not yet achieved, and with his ardent temperament he could not be an idle spectator of the unequal struggle being waged with the mother country. Hence, in the autumn of the year 1780, we find him in command of the privateer *Hannibal* carrying twenty-four guns and manned by a crew of one hundred and thirty men, and sailing under letter of marque and reprisal from the Continental Congress. After his capture in the vicinity of New York harbor he experienced for nearly two years the horrors of prison confinement and the exasperation of personal indignities; proving no less in confinement than in active service on the sea, his unswerving loyalty to the cause in which he had early in the war fearlessly embarked. Through his Revolutionary career Captain O'Brien exhibited qualities of character which in these days of steel-clad battleships and improved facilities for conducting warfare would have placed him in the front rank of successful naval commanders. As long as the American people enjoy the fruits of the Freedom which Captain Jeremiah O'Brien and his compatriots in the privateering service so materially assisted in achieving, he should be gratefully re-



THE "RIM NARROWS"

The "Rim Narrows" are so named on account of the narrowness of the Machias river at this point which is about three miles below Machias. See page 53.

membered as one who for several years "plowed the seas in search of the enemy, and hurled retaliation upon his head."



CHAPTER XI

CAPTAIN JEREMIAH O'BRIEN AT HOME AGAIN.

He Identifies Himself with Town and County Affairs—He Serves as Selectman and Grand Juror—Appointed Collector of Customs for the Machias District—War of 1812—Interesting Smuggling Case—Advance of British Force on Machias—Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien Advises Resistance—Offers to Lead the Americans Against the British—Sends a Valuable Package to be Buried—The British Take Possession of Machias—Encampment for a Week in the Village—Colonel O'Brien's House Searched—Gives an Exhibition of Audacious Pluck—Attends the Village Church—Final Illness—Death and Burial.

"Home is the sphere of harmony and peace,
The spot where angels find a resting-place,
When bearing blessings they descend to earth."

—*Mrs. Hale.*

"He who receives a good turn should never forget it; and he who does one should never remember it."—*Charron.*

"From beneath that humble roof went forth the intrepid and unselfish warrior."—*Everett.*

"He most lives
Who thinks most, feels the noblest, acts the best."

—*Bailey.*

FROM the time of his return home from Mill Prison via France, until his decease, Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien remained in Machias, occupying once more his picturesque Colonial residence on the gently sloping banks of the Machias river. During his prolonged absence from home since the outbreak of the

War of the Revolution, his parents, then well advanced in life, had probably occupied Colonel O'Brien's house and faithfully looked after his interests in the premises. The great struggle for national independence had scarcely ceased before Colonel O'Brien became actively identified with the social, business and municipal affairs of the town and county; and he is still remembered in Machias as one who, while living, contributed in no small measure toward the growth of the town to its present flourishing condition. The first bridge built in Maine east of the Kennebeck river, of which there is any record, was at Machias; it was built across Middle river in the year 1784, under the superintendency of Jonathan Pineo, who was then Surveyor of highways. In Pineo's account rendered to the Selectmen on the 9th of December, 1784, Jeremiah O'Brien is credited with "one day's work." It was about the year 1785 that Colonel O'Brien was honored by his fellow-townsmen by an election to the board of Selectmen, on which he served with credit to his constituents; and there is some evidence on record which seems to indicate that he was again, probably about the year 1815, elected to the same office, which he seems to have held at the time of his decease. In the year 1787 we find the name of Colonel O'Brien as one of the township committee of three affixed to a petition addressed to the General

Court of Massachusetts, praying for an abatement of the State tax on the ground of the impoverished condition of the inhabitants, owing to the seven years' war from which the country had but recently issued. This petition, though of considerable length, is of such exceptional interest, that it is herewith presented in full:—

“MEMORIAL OF THE INHABITANTS OF MACHIAS,
ASKING AN ABATEMENT OF STATE TAX, PRE-
SENTED IN 1787.

To the Hon. Senate and House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts :

The petition of the Town of Machias Humbly sheweth: That the General Court in March 17, 1786, taxed all the settlements in the eastern parts of this Commonwealth, among which this town was taxed £301, the tax act not coming into the hands of the Assessors until last fall and all communication being stopped between this place and Boston during the course of the winter preventing our making application to the Honorable Court before, we now beg leave to lay before you a true and unexaggerated state of our situation and the difficulties and burthens we have and still labor under.

In the month of May, 1763, about 12 men and three women came to Machias and began to erect a double saw mill, and in the month of August the

same year the remainder of their families joined them. They supposing themselves to be under the jurisdiction of the Province of Nova Scotia applied there for a grant of a Township, but the Government supposing them not to be within their limits, refused making any grant. In the year 1766, they having considerably increased in number, they made application to the Government of Massachusetts, but there being some errors in the petition, they failed, but repeatedly renewed their application until the year 1770, when a grant passed the Legislature, but then the King's approbation was to be obtained before the grant would be valid. During all this time and until the War commenced, the people were in a state of uncertainty respecting their lands, therefore directed the most of their time to lumbering, and had made but very little improvement upon their lands when hostilities commenced, at which time they had not three weeks' provision in the township, and the very early and active part they took in the late contest rendered them very obnoxious to the British commanders, and they had reason to apprehend their vengeance, and for the first year all kinds of business but war was dropped. The next year attempts were made for improving our lands but the frequent alarms upon our coasts embarrassed the people so that but little progress was made, and in the month of August

one brig that was loaded in our river and bound to the West Indies, and two sloops that were loaded by us and bound to Newbury were all taken off the mouth of the harbor soon after they sailed, by reason of which some people suffered greatly.

In the fall of the same year Mr. Eddy came along from Boston having obtained some provisions by the order of the General Court. Though not clothed with authority by them, yet he proposed to carry on an expedition against Cumberland, in Nova Scotia, and the inhabitants of Machias full of zeal to support the common cause immediately engaged with Mr. Eddy and set out for Cumberland, but finally were defeated after the severe season had set in, and had to make a retreat through the wilderness upwards of 300 miles through the snow. The next year an expedition was formed under the authority of our Government against Nova Scotia, and to enter that province by way of Cumberland, the general rendezvous to be at Machias. This the enemy got intelligence of, and before any considerable number of the troops or any cannon arrived here, a small squadron of three ships consisting of one ship of 44 guns, three frigates and an armed brig entered our harbor with a full determination to destroy us, but by the goodness of Divine Providence, and the vigorous exertions of the people they were repulsed with

great loss on their part and upon our side of one man killed, one wounded, two dwelling houses two barns and one mill burnt. They afterwards collected in force at the mouth of the river St. John, and we had frequent alarms and information that they were determined to make another attack upon us, so that all the peoples' time and attention was taken up in making the necessary preparations of defence, until the season closed, when we were informed the enemy had retired into winter quarters.

In the year 1778 we had some little tranquility, and considerable exertions were made for improving the lands. But in the year 1779 we were again thrown into the greatest distress by the enemy establishing a post at Major Biguaduce. We then expected nothing but subjugation, and people had no heart to do anything, after our troops arrived and besieged the enemy. General Loud found a reinforcement was necessary and sent an order for one-half of the Militia to join him. The draft was immediately made, and set out with Colonel Allen and had got as far as Deer Island when they received intelligence that the siege was raised. The people then returned home again but were under considerable apprehension of being subjugated, the British commander having issued a proclamation denouncing vengeance against all those that did not come at that

time and submit themselves to the British Government and take an oath of allegiance. Many persons to the westward of us were so discouraged as to fall in with the British so far as to become neutral and had petitions drawn for that purpose which were sent to this town to join in the measures, but we refusing and the steps we took prevented those places who were in favor of it from falling, whereby the whole of the country eastward of Bagaduce was preserved. The people of this town were now almost reduced to a state of desperation, but still determined never to submit until reduced by superior force, although all communication with the Metropolis and all other parts of the State from which we had any hope of relief seemed to be cut off, frequent alarms now took place this and the ensuing year and whilst the war lasted the people were called out for to erect fortifications and keep guard.

Great pains was taken by the enemy to bring the Indians upon us, and in the fall of the year 1779 the noted Major Rogers was actually sent through by the way of St. Johns to Canada to bring a body of Indians against us early in the spring, and they came a part of the way, as we were afterwards informed, until the Indians belonging to St. Johns river met them and persuaded them to return, by telling them that the French and we were brethren,

and that to fight against us would be to fight against their father the French King, as we had early intelligence of the business that Rogers was upon we really expected him and was at the expense of keeping Scouts up the river to discover the enemy if he approached.

Several vessels that were bound here with supplies were taken, and one that was loaded with fish, furs and other valuable articles and owned in the place was taken on her passage to Boston, and others that had property on board belonging to the inhabitants fell into the enemy's hand. The numerous alarms and the want of provisions very much impeded the improvements of the lands, the remaining years of the War, and kept the people in a very naked situation. When the peace took place in 1783 and goods could be obtained for lumber, they were under the necessity of obtaining considerable credit in order to carry on their business and clothe their families. The mills during the War went to decay and were rotted down, but lumber being in great demand and commanding a great price they excited to rebuild their mills but were at a very great expense in doing it, as labor of all kinds were exceeding high. We had just got under way and a prospect of discharging the demands against them when the navigation act was passed, which immediately knocked the price

of lumber down from 8 to 4 dollars per thousand, and is now a drag at 3 dollars. Thus were the people involved in the utmost distress, for most of them were in debt at the commencement of the war, and during the contest, had no means of discharging it even with paper money which they would not have done had it been in their power, and to those old debts they had been under the necessity as before mentioned of adding a very considerable new debt, and the navigation act was followed by two exceeding dry seasons especially the last, when the drouth set in very severe in July. The mills soon were stopped for want of water, and continued so the remaining part the season, and winter set in very early without rain. The crops of potatoes were cut prodigiously short and no credit to be obtained, so that the inhabitants were reduced to greater straits the winter past than during any part of the war. They have also been at a very great expense in running out their Township, laying out their lots, settling a minister and supporting him for 15 years, building and providing places for public worship, making roads, and many other heavy expenses which arise in bringing forward the settlement of a new Township.

As an almost total stop was put to all business during the war, the inhabitants in general were unable to pay the minister yearly, which obliged him to

run in debt for the support of his family, and when peace took place there was nearly nine hundred pounds to be raised to pay his salary to enable him to discharge his debts, which came very heavy on the people. Add to this his salary since the peace, £80 a year for a public school, £250 a year we have raised to make and repair roads and highways and £200 we have raised the present year for repairing our Meeting House with other expenses of the town make it almost impossible to pay any State taxes laid upon us at present, and our great desire to support the laws renders it necessary to make still further application, which is for a County to be erected in this district which if granted must be attended with very considerable expense but the necessities make us anxious for the accomplishment of it. There are many strong and urgent reasons for a County being established in this district in particular for the punishment of crimes against the public which although they are not numerous, yet there is some and among others of fornication and bastardy, also for granting licenses to persons as Innholders and retailers of spirituous liquors, for no person will be at the expense and fatigue of travelling 300 miles and upwards through wilderness and exceeding bad roads and when they come there must seek friends to be bondsmen for them which perhaps as they are strangers it will be impos-

sible for them to obtain, and the consequence will be no licensed persons in this part of the country. Liquors will be sold in a clandestine manner, and if one sell another may, and the matter will be so general that no person can be informed against or punished and individuals may thereby be very much injured by too free use of spirituous liquors.

A County road is also exceedingly wanted, which will not be obtained until a County is established here. In short, as before observed our reasons are too numerous to be mentioned. In the first years of the War the General Court found it necessary to grant the settlement on the eastern shore considerable sums of money to purchase provisions for the inhabitants. This place received with the others and have repaid the whole since the peace took place which amounted to near £1200 which we believe is the only place eastward of Penobscot that has repaid the public any part of the sums received, neither have they been at the expense of supporting a minister, building meeting houses, raising money for highways and public schools. We are informed the Honorable Court have been pleased to abate the taxes laid on several of the plantations eastward of Union river, in consideration of their inability to pay, and we are sensible that this place is the least able, for the reasons before mentioned, of paying of any in the eastern country.

At the time we petitioned to be incorporated several of the members of the General Court informed us that it would not be the means of bringing on taxation any sooner, as they supposed it would be unreasonable to tax us sooner than the other places adjacent who were more able to pay, only because we wished to be incorporated to come into better regulations among ourselves. We do not wish to flinch from the public burthen, but whenever we are able to pay anything towards it, we wish to do it with cheerfulness, but from the many difficulties we labored under during the war, our embarrassed situation at the time and since the peace took place, the large sums we have been obliged to raise for the support of a minister and other purposes, the punctual manner in which we repaid Government the moneys borrowed, together with our inability at present, we humbly pray your Honorable Court to be pleased to take our distressed state into their wise consideration and be pleased to grant us relief by remitting our State tax and as in duty bound will ever pray.

By order and in behalf of the Town of Machias.

STEPHEN JONES, }
JAMES AVERY, } Committee.
JERE' O'BRIEN, }

Attest: JAMES AVERY,

Town Clerk."

About the year 1790 the name of Colonel O'Brien appears amongst the list of names of six grand jurors. As an indication of his enterprise and thrift it may be remarked that Colonel O'Brien became an extensive landholder in Machias; and it is a fact of some interest, that in the year 1790 his assessment by the Road Surveyors was £1,18s, 7p. In a Town Meeting held at East Falls (now East Machias) on the 2d of April, 1804, it was voted: "That Jeremiah O'Brien have liberty to keep up gates and bars on his land, until the Selectmen shall see fit to remove them and make a movement to alter the road." Late in the year of 1811 Colonel O'Brien was appointed Collector of Customs for the District of Machias, Maine. This appointment is said to have come to him unsolicited on his part, through the influence of the Hon. Albert Gallatin, Secretary of the United States Treasury under President Jefferson, by whom he was appointed to that office. It is said that during a visit to Machias Mr. Gallatin formed the acquaintance of Colonel O'Brien, in whose house he was hospitably entertained; and so favorable was the impression received by this distinguished visitor that upon his subsequent appointment to the office above mentioned, he recommended his generous host for the Collectorship of Machias, with the result that he soon received the appointment, accompanied by a

personal letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, formally thanking him for his timely hospitality, and intimating that his unforgotten kindness was among the considerations which influenced him in his action.

Being desirous of ascertaining the date of Colonel O'Brien's appointment to the Collectorship, and of procuring other information concerning his service as Collector, the author wrote the present incumbent of that office, and received the following reply :

“OFFICE OF THE COLLECTOR OF CUSTOMS,
PORT OF MACHIAS, ME.,
Sept. 7, 1900.

Mr. A. M. Sherman,

Morristown, N. J.

DEAR SIR :

In reply to your letter of the 1st inst., would say, Jeremiah O'Brien was the 3d Collector of Customs for this District. His term of office was from 1811 to 1819. Cannot give date of appointment. Salary 3 per cent. commission on duties collected and \$250 per annum, and fees allowed by law. I enclose copy of signature.

Respectfully yours,

W. H. PHINNEY,

Sp. Depy. Collector.”

Failing in his effort to ascertain from the Machias Custom House records the date of Colonel

O'Brien's appointment to the Collectorship, the author then wrote the Secretary of the Treasury, at Washington, D. C. Following is the reply received from that official:

“TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY,
Washington, D. C., October 2, 1900.

Division of Appointments.

Rev. A. M. Sherman,
Morristown, N. J.

SIR:

Replying to your letter of the 21st, ultimo, containing inquiries relative to the appointment of Jeremiah O'Brien as Collector of Customs at the port of Machias, Maine, and requesting that copies of a few of his letters to the Treasury Department containing his signature be furnished you, you are informed that Jeremiah O'Brien, of Massachusetts, was appointed Collector of Customs for the district of Machias by James Madison, President of the United States, on November 26, 1811. As there are no records now in existence of any letters received from Mr. O'Brien as Collector, the Department is unable to furnish you with the copies requested.

Respectfully,

O. L. SPAULDING,
Acting Secretary.”

It was during Colonel O'Brien's administration as Collector of Customs for the District of Machias, that the war of 1812 took place. With the collusion of Americans with British subjects smuggling, to an enormous extent, was carried on along the coast of Maine. On Friday, the 27th of August, 1813, the sloop *Traveller* engaged in an attempt to smuggle goods into the United States, was captured by a private armed American boat called the *Lark*. The case was taken into the United States District Court; and, as the capture was made in waters included in Colonel O'Brien's jurisdiction, he received as his share of the value of the condemned prize and her cargo, the handsome net sum of \$4,277.11. The Custom House office during Colonel O'Brien's incumbency was in the rear of the store of Captain George Stillman Smith, the Deputy Collector at Machias; and this place became famous as the rendezvous of many local celebrities.

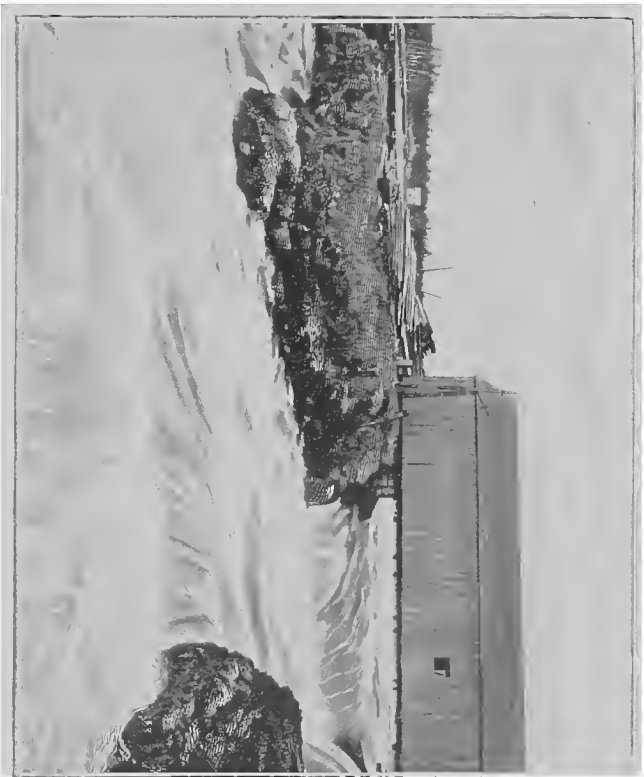
Following is a fac-simile of the handwriting of Colonel O'Brien while Collector of Customs at Machias; it was made from a tracing, by the present incumbent of the office, of a public document on file in the Custom House:

(Seal)

Jeremiah O'Brien Collector

In the month of September, 1814, the British military forces landed at Buck's Harbor and marched overland toward Machias by way of Machiasport, situated some four miles southeast of the former place. At about the same time a force of British marines moved up the Machias river in barges toward the village. Early in the morning of Wednesday, September 11, the British military force of greatly superior numbers surprised the American fort at Machiasport, from which the small garrison precipitately fled, hastening by way of Machias, westward, in the direction of Columbia Falls; this of course opened the way for the unimpeded march of the enemy on Machias. Colonel O'Brien was aware of the movements of the British forces, having in some way kept himself informed concerning them from the hour of their landing at Buck's Harbor. A day or two previous to the entrance of the British forces into Machias, he donned his Revolutionary uniform; buckled on his sword; saddled the white horse* he was accustomed to ride, (he was an excellent horseman, and made a fine appearance on horseback) and, mounting him rode at break-neck speed up the "Port" road and across the "lower bridge" into the northern village. Reining his foaming steed up with a strong pull and brand-

* "The horse was minus one eye"—said an old resident of Machias, who had frequently seen both horse and rider.



WEST FALLS, MACHIAS, ME.

These falls, the Indian name of which was "Kwaps-hitch-wock," signifying "the bad place of the waters," are situated in the upper central portion of the village.

ishing his sword in the air, Colonel O'Brien called upon the citizens to rally about him and march out on the Machiasport road to meet and oppose the progress of the British forces. "If a dozen men will start with me I will lead you out against the British!" exclaimed this staunch patriot of 70 years. He doubtless reasoned that around this nucleus of a dozen men a force would eventually rally sufficient to successfully resist the British forces in their advance on the village. He evidently had little respect for the prowess of the King's soldiery. But Colonel O'Brien could not persuade even a dozen men to rally about him. His friends, while admiring the pluck of their fellow-townsmen, earnestly besought him to give up the idea of resistance—insisting that resistance would only result in the destruction of the village. Reluctantly yielding to the entreaties of his friends he turned his horse's head homeward, put the spurs into his sides, and hastened across the "lower bridge" into the southern village; uttering, in the heat of his indignation, imprecations of no ordinary kind.* Anticipating that upon the entrance of the British forces into Machias his house would be searched, Captain

* The saddle on which Colonel O'Brien rode into the northern village on the occasion above referred to, is now in the possession of Mrs. Josephine O'Brien Campbell, of Cherryfield, Me. She is a great grand-daughter of Gideon O'Brien, the eldest brother of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien.

O'Brien, on the evening of Tuesday, the 10th of September, made up a package of valuables in his possession, consisting of money and important papers, and, early on the morning of the 11th, sent it away by a trusty messenger to be buried out of reach of the British. At about eleven o'clock on the forenoon of Wednesday, September 11, the British marines landed at several wharves on the northern village side of the river; and at about the same hour the military forces came into town by way of the Machiasport road. Crossing the "lower bridge" they marched into and took unhindered possession of the village; the inhabitants fearing that any resistance on their part would bring swift destruction upon the place. The marines were quartered in the "Dr. Clark House" near the northern end of the "lower bridge;" and the military forces encamped on land in the rear of the site occupied by the present Court House. From his residence Colonel O'Brien could look across the Machias river and see the white tents of the enemy's encampment; and the sight was anything but pleasing to this ardent American. Soon after the arrival of the British forces in the village some of the Colonel's friends made it their business to call upon him at his home in the interests of peace; and before their departure they exacted a promise from him that he would be circumspect in his speech while the enemy

remained in town, lest his characteristic outspokenness might precipitate British vengeance on the heads of the inhabitants.

During their stay in the village the enemy foraged liberally on gardens and fields and stock yards, but they molested none of the inhabitants personally. Many of the houses in the village were searched by the British for arms and ammunition; among them the house of Colonel O'Brien. To the search he made no objection whatever. He conducted the King's officer and guard of several soldiers through the house; and, on reaching a closet on the second floor in which he kept his Revolutionary relics, the Colonel quietly took down a sword,* courteously remarking as he held it up before the interested British officer: "This, sir, is the only weapon of defense I have in the house." The chivalrous British officer, it is almost superfluous to remark, left the sword in the "Yankee" Colonel's possession; and it was promptly returned to its wonted place in the closet. The British officer espying a three-cornered gold-lace trimmed naval hat hanging in the relic-closet pleasantly en-

* The sword exhibited on the occasion referred to above was one that was captured by Colonel O'Brien, from the British armed vessel *Margaretta* on the 12th of June, 1775; it is in the possession of Mrs. Josephine O'Brien Campbell, of Cherryfield, Me., a great grand-daughter of Gideon O'Brien, the eldest brother of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien. The sword was, subsequent to its capture by Captain O'Brien, used by him during his privateering career.

quired: "What is that, Colonel?" "That," replied Colonel O'Brien, removing from its hanging place the hat he had sacredly treasured since war's dread alarms had ceased,— "that, sir, is the hat I wore in the War of the Revolution;" and the careful observer might have seen a peculiar twinkle of his blue eyes, as he made this proud announcement to the searching party. The search completed, and no arms or ammunition having been discovered on the premises, Colonel O'Brien invited the British officer (a large, handsome man, by the way) and his soldiers to the sitting room below for refreshments. Going at once into the spacious cellar the Colonel drew a pitcher of cider, brought it still foaming up to the apartment which answered for sitting room and dining room, and, after cake had been placed upon the linen-spread table, the entire party, by invitation of the host, drew their high, straight-back chairs to the hospitable board. The cider was poured into mugs; and after the brimming mugs had been lifted by each from the table, the British officer addressing his host said: "Colonel, will you offer a toast?" Instantly the impulsive Colonel jumped to his feet, and lifting his agitated mug of cider high in the air, he fearlessly exclaimed: "Here's to the success of the American arms!" For a moment—such is the testimony of an eye-witness—there was profound

silence in the room; and then the officer and soldiers burst into hearty laughter, over the sentiment of the Colonel's toast; who, though completely in their power, had given such a remarkable exhibition of audacious pluck. It is the opinion of the author that no incident in the entire career of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien more completely shows the impulsiveness and fearlessness of the man than that just related. "He was a man who knew no fear"—such is the estimate of Colonel O'Brien which has come down to the present generation from those whose acquaintance with him was intimate. The British officer and soldiers could not, of course, join in the toast presented by their hospitable host; neither could the loyal host join in the toast afterward presented by the epauleted British guest, which was: "Here's to the health of the King!" After a friendly chat of somewhat lengthy duration the British officer withdrew with his squad, and, gathering up the guard posted outside the house moved away for the search of other buildings in the village. The British forces remained in Machias about a week, when, like the Arabs "they folded their tents," and marched away; since which time a uniformed British soldier has not been seen on the streets of peaceful, picturesque Machias.

Although Colonel O'Brien was not a member of

any church* he was, however, a frequent attendant in the latter part of his life, upon the services of the Congregational Church in the village; in which church he had for many years rented a favorably located pew. He was, it should be remarked, a man of excellent habits, and of good moral standing in community. "I never saw him use stimulants" said one whose acquaintance with Colonel O'Brien in the latter part of his life was intimate. He did not even use tobacco in any form, except as snuff, which in his day was an almost universal custom, particularly among persons advanced in life. It was a familiar sight to see Colonel O'Brien at this period of his life, deftly open his gold snuff box, bearing on its lid a medallion portrait of Jefferson, and with his thumb and finger lift from its contents the desired "pinch" of the powdered weed. There is what seems to be a reliable tradition that this gold snuff box was a present to Colonel O'Brien from President Thomas Jefferson. To the day of his final illness Colonel O'Brien wore a queue, knee breeches, knee buckles and shoe buckles, and presented, therefore, a quaint and striking appearance on the streets of Machias. Colonel O'Brien died while Collector of Customs,

* Colonel O'Brien's father, Morris O'Brien, was one of the original members of the Congregational Church of Machias; and in the Manual of the church, containing amongst other interesting data the roll of members from its organization, the name of Morris O'Brien appears as number 26 on the long list.

having at the time of his decease held the office nearly two terms of four years each. His final illness was of short duration, lasting but a few days. On Saturday, the 5th of September, 1818, he passed peacefully away at his home, aged 74 years. His decease was without doubt anticipated by him, as only a short time prior to his departure, he executed his last will and testament, and, in the full use of his faculties, made other and additional arrangements for the disposal of his worldly effects. Among the bequests, by his last will, of Colonel O'Brien, to his nephew, the Hon. Jeremiah O'Brien, of Machias, was the sword already spoken of in connection with the search of his house by the British soldiers, in the month of September, 1814; and also a "fusee," or small, single-barrel gun, which were captured from the *Margaretta*, on June 12, 1775. Sword and gun—both of which were subsequently used by Captain O'Brien during his extended privateering career—are now now in the possession of Mrs. Josephine O'Brien Campbell, of Cherryfield, Me., a granddaughter of Hon. Jeremiah O'Brien. The thoughtful disposal by will of the sword and gun above-mentioned, by Colonel O'Brien, is here spoken of as an illustration of his high regard for his Revolutionary relics, and as indicative also of his desire that they be suitably cared for and cherished by future

generations. Mrs. Henry F. Harding, of East Machias, has in her possession Colonel O'Brien's holster carried by him in the War of the Revolution; the pistols, however, are missing. Mrs. Harding received this highly interesting relic of the Revolution through her father, the Hon. Jeremiah O'Brien, a nephew of the Colonel, to whom it was bequeathed. This seems to be the proper place to remark that the sword carried by Captain Jeremiah O'Brien at the time of his enforced surrender of the *Hannibal*, was presumably delivered to the ranking British officer to whom the ship was formally surrendered. It may now be gracing some British museum. At the time of Colonel O'Brien's decease the pastor of the Congregational Church of Machias, the Rev. Marshfield Steele, was absent from the village; and the venerable Deacon Joseph Libby of the Congregational Church officiated at the funeral as the pastor's substitute. This he frequently did in the absence of the pastor, or when by reason of illness he was unable to officiate at a funeral. The sacred music for the occasion, the funeral exercises being held at Colonel O'Brien's late residence, on Monday, September 7th, was furnished by members of the village church choir, among whom were the following: Captain George Stillman Smith, (a life-long and cherished friend of Colonel O'Brien,) and the

Misses Susan and Nancy Sanborn. Captain Smith was at the time leader of the choir. The book from which the choir sang was as follows:

THE PSALMS OF DAVID

Instituted in the Language of the New Testament

and

Applied to the Christian State and Worship

BY I. WATTS, D. D.

Luke XXIV:44

Acts XI:22 and 40

NEWBURYPORT
WILLIAM HASTINGS, PRINTER
1818

The hymn selected by Colonel O'Brien during his final illness to be sung at his funeral was the 81st number in the above-mentioned book, which was as follows:

Our Sin the Cause of Christ's Death

- I. And now the scales have left mine eyes,
Now I begin to see;
O the cursed deeds my sins have done!
What mur'drous things they be!

2. Were these the traitors, dearest Lord,
That thy fair body tore?
Monsters, that stain'd those heavenly limbs
With floods of purple gore?
3. Was it for crimes that I have done,
My dearest Lord was slain;
When justice seized God's only Son,
And put his soul to pain?
4. Forgive my guilt, O Prince of peace!
I'll wound my God no more;
Hence, from my heart, ye sins be gone,
For Jesus I adore.
5. Furnish me, Lord, with heavenly arms
From grace's magazine;
And I'll proclaim eternal war
With every darling sin.

The body of Colonel O'Brien was prepared for burial in a shroud of black, which in those early days was a favorite dress for the dead. At the conclusion of the funeral exercises at the late residence of the deceased the remains were tenderly taken out of the door on the northern side of the house—the side facing the Machias river—and conveyed by the pall bearers on the bier, the procession of mourners thoughtfully following, across the still verdant fields to the family burial place but a few rods distant. The usual religious ceremony at the grave concluded, the remains were solemnly deposited in the earth, the immortal part having risen to the Being who gave it. A picture of the headstone marking the resting place of Colonel O'Brien's remains, with the modest inscription, may be seen in this volume; and a picture



VIEW OF THE "O'BRIEN BURIAL GROUND," MACHIAS, ME.

The "O'Brien Burial Ground" is situated on the southerly side of, and overlooking, the Machias river. The picture above shows a portion of the southern village of Machias including the residence of Mr. William C. Holway, which may be seen in the background and to the right. See opposite page.

also giving a general view of the O'Brien Burial Ground.

"What is death
To him who meets it with an upright heart?
A quiet haven, where his shattered bark
Harbours secure, till the rough storm is past;
Perhaps a passage overhung with clouds,
But at its entrance, a few leagues beyond
Opening to kinder skies and milder suns,
And seas pacific as the soul that seeks them."

—*Hurdis.*

It seems eminently fitting to remark in the concluding lines of this chapter, that among the traits of character which stand out conspicuously to view in the life of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien may be mentioned the following: By temperament he was impulsive almost to the point of rashness, and in action, particularly when thoroughly aroused, he was impetuous and irresistible as the raging torrent—exhibiting at such times a forcefulness of character which under ordinary circumstances was not apparent to the casual observer. Captain Jeremiah O'Brien was as fearless as the king of the forest—not for a moment hesitating to throw himself into the forefront of any cause by him freely espoused, or to face any peril, however great, toward which the voice of duty called him in the prosecution of that cause. Outspoken he was—and fear of consequences was never, so far as the author has been able to gather, allowed to bridle his tongue when once indignant feeling or a

great thought throbbed in heart or brain and pressed for utterance; and individual and aggregation of individuals fared the same, when once Captain O'Brien felt his keen sense of justice outraged. But he was tender-hearted as a woman, and hence many a hasty word or explosive sentence or rash action was afterward deeply regretted, and to the extent of his ability to make amends, was suitably amended. Had Captain O'Brien studied more closely his personal interests, he would doubtless have been more circumspect in his speech. "Open, candid, and generous, his heart was the constant companion of his hand, and his tongue the artless index of his mind"*—these are words as appropriate in their application to the famous privateer commander whose name we seek to perpetuate, as if originally written of him. To a fault Captain Jeremiah O'Brien was generous, whether in the private distribution of his money amongst the needy, or in the expenditure of his time and energy in the earnest prosecution of the public cause in which he engaged; hence, in whatever station he was placed he was strenuously faithful up to the limit of his capacity. In deportment toward his fellows he was a gentleman. He was by no means lacking in enterprise and thrift and shrewdness in the sphere of business. Independence of spirit was a marked char-

* George Canning.

acteristic of Captain O'Brien—he dared stand alone, if need be, in the advocacy or defence of a just cause; in proof of which statement it may be said that he was among the first of the citizens of Machias, Maine, to initiate the revolt against British tyranny; and this he did in the face of a strong local tory sentiment emboldened by proximity to a loyal British province, and situated only a day's sail from a British naval fleet. To the cause of Freedom which he fearlessly espoused at the opening of the Seven Years' Struggle for National Independence, Captain Jeremiah O'Brien faithfully adhered, through all its vicissitudes, to the end. To his modesty, which approached the line of self-depreciation, and to his deference to others, all of whom by no means were his superiors in ability and integrity, may be attributed, in no inconsiderable measure, the fact that from his contemporaries he seems not to have received due credit for his services in the War of the Revolution. Possessed himself of a keen sense of justice, which is “to give every man his own,” Captain O'Brien assumed the same quality in others; but in not a few instances in connection with his public career he was greatly disappointed in this assumption. To say that he was high-spirited—quick to take offense and equally as quick to resent it—is superfluous, since this is the invariable accompaniment of a keen sense

of justice such as he possessed. Of Captain O'Brien's patriotism it should be said: it was of the unselfish kind that withheld nothing from the cause of Freedom in which he early embarked; and which burned brightly upon the altar of his heart even after the infirmities of age had bowed his once athletic form, and he was no longer able to efficiently wield the sword in the interests of the country whose independence he had materially assisted in achieving, and under the folds of whose starry flag he was content to lay down his life.

Henceforth let Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, the Ardent and Unselfish American Patriot; the Fearless and Able Pioneer Naval Commander; the Staunch Friend and Kind-Hearted Gentleman, and the Eminently Useful Citizen, occupy a place amongst the foremost of the noble souls who labored and fought and suffered in their inflexible purpose to establish upon the shores of the Western Continent the Republic whose inestimable privileges we now enjoy! And for all coming time let his name, and the invaluable public services for which it stands, be honored and appreciated and sacredly cherished by a free and independent and progressive people! for

“When gratitude o'erflows the swelling here,
And breathes in free and uncorrupted praise
For benefits received; propitious heaven
Takes such acknowledgement as fragrant incense,
And doubles all its blessings.” —Lillo.



HEADSTONE OF COLONEL JEREMIAH O'BRIEN

The headstone above shown marks the resting place of the remains of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien in the "O'Brien Burial Ground," situated on the southerly side of the Machias river, at Machias, Me. Colonel O'Brien was born in the year 1744, and was therefore 74 years of age at the time of his decease, instead of 79 years as given on the headstone above. The above picture is from a photograph taken in July, 1900, during the last visit of the author to Machias.

CHAPTER XII

A REVOLUTIONARY HERO HONORED

Torpedo Boat "O'Brien"—Launch of the New Naval Vessel—Christening by a Descendant of Joseph O'Brien—For Whom Named—Official Statement—The "O'Brien" Described—"Fort O'Brien"—"O'Brien Rifles."

"Lull'd in the countless chambers of the brain,
Our thoughts are link'd by many a hidden chain;
Awake but one, and lo, what myriads rise!
Each stamps its image as the other flies."—*Pope*.

"Honors achieved far exceed those that are created."
—*Solon*.

"How vain are all hereditary honors,
Those poor possessions from another's deeds,
Unless our own just virtues form our title,
And give a sanction to our fond assumptions."—*Shirley*.

THE American people were not a little startled by the announcement through the press in the early months of the year 1900, that one of the new naval vessels in process of construction at the Crescent Shipyard, at Elizabethport, New Jersey, under the provisions of the last naval appropriation bill, was to be named the "O'Brien." Even United States naval officers began at once to inquire: "O'Brien! O'Brien! Who is he? What did he do to entitle him to the honor of having one of our most formidable torpedo boats named after him?" and the

eager inquiries of these naval officers voiced the surprise of the bulk of the people of America. There was at least one individual at our National Capital who could with ease answer these questions, for he was familiar with the name, and with the history of the man—Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, of Revolutionary fame—who was to be thus honored; that individual was the Hon. John D. Long, Secretary of the United States Navy, who is a native of the Pine Tree State, in which was born, and in which resided the one whose name and heroic deeds it was intended to perpetuate in the manner already mentioned. Indeed, it was this loyal son of Maine who had appreciatively bestowed the name "O'Brien" upon one of the new vessels of our modern navy. The heroic services of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien in the War of the Revolution have already been described in the volume of which this chapter is the conclusion; hence it is unnecessary to repeat the story here. The author ventures, however, to express the opinion that those who have carefully read the preceding chapters will no longer experience surprise that one of our new naval vessels has been named after that gallant and meritorious officer.

In the presence of a large party of government officials and others the torpedo boat "O'Brien" was launched at 8.30 o'clock on the morning of Septem-



THE TORPEDO BOAT "O'BRIEN" IN PROCESS OF CONSTRUCTION

The picture above shows the torpedo boat "O'Brien" in process of construction at the Crescent Shipyard, Elizabethport, New Jersey. The "O'Brien" is 173 feet in length, 17 feet beam, and draws $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet of water. She has a guaranteed speed of twenty-six knots an hour. She carries three torpedo launching tubes and three rapid-fire guns. The engines are triple expansion, with four cylinders—18, 27, 27½ and 27½ inches diameter by 58 inches stroke, using steam at 250 pounds pressure. Her engines are much larger than those in any of the other vessels of her class. Steel has been used wherever possible, and when wood has been used it has been electrically treated so as to make it fire-proof. The piston-rods, shafts, connecting-rods and working parts are of nickel steel.

ber 24th, 1900. Miss Myra Lincoln O'Brien, of Philadelphia, a great-great granddaughter of Joseph O'Brien, the youngest of the six O'Brien brothers who assisted in the capture of the British armed vessel *Margaretta* in Machias Bay, June 12, 1775, christened the new boat by the usual ceremony of breaking a bottle of wine over her prow. The launch was effected without a hitch. In honor of the name of the boat to be launched her keel had been painted green for the occasion; and a bunch of roses carried by Miss O'Brien was tied with green ribbon. This was the first American vessel to receive an Irish name; and the bestowal of the name was in accordance with the plan adopted by the United States Government to give our new war vessels the names of the more prominent naval heroes of American history. The sword of Captain James Moore, who was in command of the British vessel *Margaretta* when captured, was brought to the launching of the "O'Brien," and was an object of much interest to the party there assembled. This sword, subsequent to its capture on June 12, 1775, was presented to Joseph O'Brien as "the baby" of the *Unity's* crew, and from him it has been handed down through the intervening generations to Mrs. N. V. Taliaferro, of Philadelphia, his eldest grand-daughter, to whom it now belongs.

At the time of the launch of the torpedo boat "O'Brien" the author was engaged in the preparation of this volume. Having seen in several newspapers the statement that this new naval vessel had been named in honor of the six O'Brien brothers who assisted in the capture of the *Margaretta*, the author about a year subsequent to the launch, wrote the Hon. John D. Long, Secretary of the Navy, for the purpose of verifying his own opinion in the matter, and receiving an official statement of the facts in the case. Following is the correspondence, in substance:

MORRISTOWN, N. J.,
August 1, 1901.

HON. JOHN D. LONG,
SEC. U. S. NAVY,
Washington, D. C.

MY DEAR SIR:—I beg to say that I have for several years been collecting data for a biography of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, of Machias, Maine, and expect soon to have it in shape for publication in book form with several half-tone illustrations. It is my purpose to speak of the torpedo boat "O'Brien;" and inasmuch as there seems to be a difference of opinion as to whom the boat is named after, whether Jeremiah or the six brothers O'Brien, I would respectfully ask of you an official statement in the matter, so that I may speak with authority and not from

newspaper reports. If you have no objection, it would be gratifying to me to have your statement published *verbatim* in the forthcoming biography of Captain O'Brien. Thanking you in advance for your reply. I am

Yours very respectfully,

A. M. SHERMAN.

P. S.—If you have objection I will simply say the boat was named after Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, as, in my own mind I am now satisfied is the fact.

NAVY DEPARTMENT,

Washington, August 3, 1901.

SIR:—In response to the inquiry made in your letter of the 1st instant, I have to inform you that the twenty-six knot torpedo boat, No. 30, "O'Brien," now under construction at the Crescent Shipyard, Elizabethport, New Jersey, was named in honor of Jeremiah O'Brien. That officer commanded the schooner that captured the "Margaretta" in the first sea fight of the Revolution. He also commanded the "Liberty," and captured many British prizes. No objection is perceived to your publishing, as you desire, in the biography of Captain O'Brien, the information herein furnished.

Very respectfully,

T. W. HACKETT,
Acting Secretary.

E. P. K.

REV. A. M. SHERMAN,
Morristown, N. J.

The torpedo boat "O'Brien" is 175 feet in length, 17 feet beam, and draws $4\frac{1}{2}$ feet of water. She has a guaranteed speed of twenty-six knots an hour. She carries three torpedo launching tubes and three rapid-fire guns. The engines are triple expansion, with four cylinders,—18, 27, $27\frac{1}{2}$ and $27\frac{1}{2}$ inches diameter by 18 inches stroke, using steam at 250 pounds pressure. Her engines are much larger than those in any of the other vessels of her class. Steel has been used wherever possible, and when wood has been used it has been electrically treated so as to make it fire-proof. The piston-rods, shafts, connecting rods and working parts generally are of nickle steel. The "O'Brien," whose crew will consist of 60 men, including officers, is a magnificent boat; and as she sits low in the water she will be hard to find by the enemy, even with the use of search-lights. Like her namesake she will be a fighter if need be. In peace and in war may she sustain the honor of the name she bears!

"FORT O'BRIEN"

MACHIAS, ME.*

Three times during the War of the Revolution—

* The tardy receipt of certain data concerning "Fort O'Brien" and "Co. M, O'Brien Rifles" by the author, renders it necessary, if these interesting matters are to be mentioned in this edition of the "Life of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien," that they be inserted out of chronological order.



LAUNCH OF THE TORPEDO BOAT "O'BRIEN"

The Torpedo Boat "O'Brien," named in honor of Captain Jeremiah O'Brien, by the Hon. John D. Long, Secretary of the United States Navy, was launched from the Crescent Shipyard, Elizabethport, N. J., on the 24th of September, 1908. The view above shows the boat as she was leaving the ways and gliding gracefully into the water. A large party of government officials and others witnessed the launch, which was effected without a hitch. See page 225.

twice in the year 1776 and again in the year 1777,—Admiral Graves, commander-in-chief of the British naval forces in American waters, (with headquarters at Port Royal, now Halifax, N. S.,) threatened the destruction of Machias, Maine; and several times during the period mentioned Graves sent formidable expeditions against the place. This he did in retaliation for the capture of the British vessels *Margaretta*, *Diligent* and *Tapnaquish* in Machias Bay, and for the purpose of breaking up a military expedition reported to be forming against Nova Scotia, with headquarters at Machias.

As a means of protection against attack by the British naval forces earthworks or “forts” were thrown up at different points on the Machias river between Machias and Machiasport, commencing at White’s Point in the northern village of the former place. During the War of the Revolution and for many years thereafter these “forts” were designated by such terms as: “the fort at the Rim;” “the fort at White’s Point”—and so forth, according to their location. These “forts” were also utilized for defense against the British in the war of 1812. In the year 1863—while the Civil War was in progress—fears were entertained that the Confederate privateer *Alabama* or other Confederate armed vessel might raid Machias, which was then, as now, a prosperous lum-

ber town, beside being the County Seat. As a means of protection against prospective attack by the Confederate vessels the United States Government ordered the repair of several of the old Revolutionary "forts" along the Machias river; and a small force of Union soldiers was sent to garrison these river defences. To the "fort" on the northern side of the "Rim Narrows" the name "O'Brien" was given, in honor of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien of Revolutionary fame; this is the name by which it is at present known. A picture of "Fort O'Brien" may be seen in this volume showing the magazine for ammunition. A native of Washington County, and a resident and prominent citizen of Machias, in a recent letter to the author remarks: "The name of O'Brien was never more popular in Machias than now."

COMPANY M, "O'BRIEN RIFLES," MACHIAS, ME.

In the month of May, 1897, there appeared in one of the weekly newspapers of Machias, Me., the following notice: "Everybody is making great preparations to witness the first appearance of Co. M, National Guard State of Maine in full dress uniform, at Phenix Opera House, Machias, next Wednesday evening, on which occasion the company will be given the name of "O'Brien Rifles"—in honor of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien, of Revolutionary fame—

and will be presented with Company Colors, by Morris O'Brien Campbell. The colors are the gift of Mrs. Josephine O'Brien Campbell * * *

Company M, has made great preparations for this occasion, and no pains will be spared to make this the gala event of the season. The program is as follows:

Concert at	8 o'clock
Presentation, Company Colors	8.30
Drill	8.45
Ball	9.15
Supper in Banquet Hall, 2d floor	11.00

This is the initial entertainment to be given by Company M, and a most enjoyable time is anticipated, especially by the young and gay; while everybody will be transplanted to that "life Elysium," as the uniformed soldiers and fair maidens, trip the "light fantastic toe." The admission will be 25 cents. Tickets for the Ball, which includes admission for gentleman and lady, \$1.00. The stage will be reserved for the invited guests and the ladies escorted by members of the company. The gallery will be reserved for the public, the two front rows of seats will be 15 cents per seat, the remainder 10 cents, in addition to the price of admission, so all will have a good opportunity to see the drill, presentation and ball, and avoid the rush, and annoyance of holding their seats.

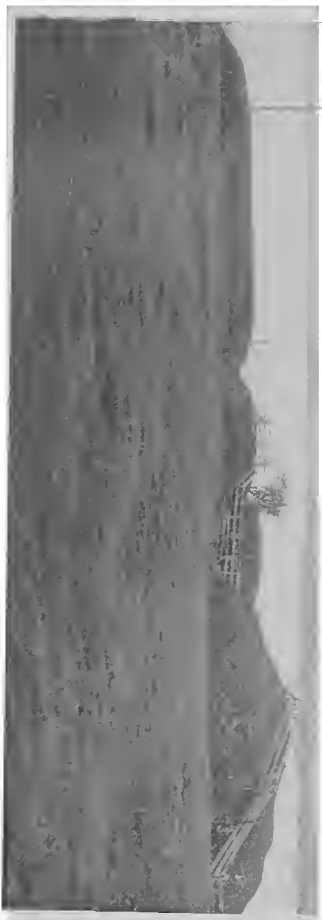
Reserved seats can be secured of private Ralph C. Bailey, Company Treasurer."

The following account of the above-mentioned entertainment appeared in a subsequent issue of one of the Machias newspapers: "The Exhibition Drill, Banquet and Ball at the Phenix Opera House on Wednesday evening, on the occasion of naming ('O'Brien Rifles') and presentation of a beautiful flag to Co. M. N. G. S. M., given by Mrs. Josephine O'Brien Campbell, was the event of the season. The stage, ceiling and balcony were handsomely draped with flags and streamers, and during the assembling of the audience the Border City Orchestra discoursed sweet music. The stage was reserved for the dancers and invited guests. At the appointed hour the Company appeared in uniform and formed to salute the flag by a 'present.' After the salute the flag was presented by Morris O'Brien Campbell in the following language:

'Captain Bowker and members of Company M, I have the honor of presenting these company colors and of naming you the *O'Brien Rifles* of Machias.'

Following the presentation, County Attorney, F. I. Campbell addressed the company as follows:

'Captain Bowker and men of Company M. It affords us all great pleasure to be present at this presentation of your company colors and the naming of your excellent company.'



"FORT O'BRIEN," MACHIAS, ME.

The "fort" or earthenworks seen in the above picture is now known as "Fort () Brien" having been so named during the Civil War in honor of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien. This "fort" which was constructed during the War of the Revolution, for protection against attack from the British naval force, is situated on the northern side of the "Rim Narrows" on the Machias river, about 3 miles below Machias. It was here that on the 13th of August, 1777, a sharp fight took place between a British force of several hundred men and the American force under Captain Benjamin Foster. The British were driven back to their vessel with serious losses. The mound at the right of the picture above is the powder magazine. The water in the background is a portion of the Machias river.

Our shire town, with its celebrated historical associations can well and appropriately maintain a company of our National Guard, and as we hailed with delight the *birth* of this new company we now with pleasure attend your *christening*.

Mrs. Campbell, who is still a loyal daughter of Machias, regrets that she cannot be with you to-night, and asks that you accept with this banner, which she presents by the hands of her elder son, Morris O'Brien Campbell, her very best wishes for your future welfare and prosperity, and thanks you for the opportunity you have afforded her of perpetuating the memory of paternal ancestors and their brave associates in the capture of the *Margaretta*, by the company name of *O'Brien Rifles*.

As your name recalls the valor of the men of Machias in the first naval battle of the Revolution, so may your colors inspire you with the patriotism of the men of Machias, in more recent days; may they remind you of the service and sacrifices of General Hiram Burnham of O'Brien ancestry; may the flag recall the heroic deeds of Harris, of Stone, of Ballinger and their brave comrades in the war for the preservation of the Union, and may your efficiency and service honor your colors and your name as you to-night by them are honored.'

The response of Captain F. W. Bowker* was as follows:

‘To Morris O’Brien Campbell and the generous donor of the colors. I would, in behalf of Company M, and the citizens of Machias, extend our sincere thanks. To receive the name of *O’Brien Rifles*, is indeed an honor of which we are justly proud. Our well-wishers can ask no more than that the future history of Company M, will be such that we may be considered worthy of this name.’

At the termination of this speech the orchestra rendered the “Star Spangled Banner,” and the smiling audience manifested approval of the act and sentiments expressed, by applause. Captain Bowker then maneuvered his company in some of the evolutions of the soldier in company formation and also in the manual of arms. All of these movements were creditably executed by this company, whose privileges thus far have been confined to the narrow limits of the hall. The proficiency made is indicative of interest and effort, and the soldierly bearing of the officers and men is a guarantee that the future reputation of the “O’Brien Rifles” will honor the name.

The grand march was formed at the appointed

* Captain F. W. Bowker is a great-grandson of Major Levi Bowker, a Revolutionary soldier, and brother-in-law of Hannah Weston.

hour and was led by Morris O'Brien Campbell and his sister, Miss Mary Elizabeth Campbell.

The banquet room, presided over by the Universalist Society, presented an appearance of beauty and plenty. At the tables were seated upwards of seventy couples, the most of whom remained and participated in the dancing;

"Where youth and beauty meet
To chase the glowing hours with flying feet."

The following from the East Machias correspondent of one of the Machias newspapers appeared during the week after the entertainment in the Phenix Opera House: "Mrs. H. F. Harding* went to Machias to be present Wednesday evening when the beautiful Lyon's silk banner was presented to the 'O'Brien Rifles' at Phenix Opera House, before a large assemblage of citizens, besides a goodly number of invited guests from other towns. Morris O'Brien Campbell, who presented the flag, is the eldest son of Mrs. Fred. Campbell, a niece of Mrs. Harding, and a 'collateral' descendant of Colonel O'Brien, who was so famous during the Revolutionary War. Co. M, in full dress uniform, is reported as presenting a fine appearance.'"

* Mrs. Harding is the wife of Rev. Henry F. Harding, pastor, at the time of the above-mentioned entertainment, of the Congregational Church, East Machias, Me., situated about four miles from the County Seat.

Company M, "O'Brien Rifles" in the year 1898, volunteered as a man for service in the Spanish-American War; but as only one regiment was required of the State of Maine, the company after several weeks' encampment at Augusta was sent back to Machias. A battalion of artillery was, however, formed from the Second Regiment, (with which Co. M, was connected) and the four companies, I, K, L, and M, furnished the officers and men for one company of said battalion.

"CAPTAIN JEREMIAH O'BRIEN GARRISON NO. 144,
REGULAR ARMY AND NAVY UNION OF THE
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA."

The following clippings from the press of Machias, Me., will explain themselves:

"Hon. J. K. Ames has placed on our table a copy of *The Independent*, June 5, published at Seoul, Korea, which gives an account of Memorial Day exercises at Chemulpo, planned and carried out by the "Captain Jeremiah O'Brien Garrison No. 144, Regular Army and Navy Union of the U. S. of America." The home and quarters of this garrison are on the U. S. S. Machias. The account speaks of the capture of the *Margaretta* June 12, 1775, and the appropriate naming of the S. S. Machias, and garrison. The garrison decorated not only the graves of Americans but of the English at the cemetery at

1.30 p. m. The regular Memorial services as carried out comprised 12 numbers.

The headquarters of an organization known as the "Captain Jeremiah O'Brien Garrison, No. 144, Regular Army and Navy U. S. of America," is upon the gunboat *Machias* which was lying at Chemulpo, Japan, on Memorial Day. A letter and paper received from there by the Hon. J. K. Ames, gives an account of the Memorial exercises held at that place by this organization in commemoration of departed American seamen and soldiers buried there. This account, which is very interesting, has been furnished the *Republican* for publication but will necessarily be omitted from this issue by reason of the lateness of its reception. We will give the account entire in our next paper."

Veritas Vincit.



APPENDIX



A SKETCH OF MORRIS O'BRIEN.

Morris (or Maurice, as originally spelled) O'Brien, the father of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien, of Machias, Maine, was born in the city of Dublin, Ireland, in the year 1715. The subject of this sketch claimed lineal descent from one of the old Irish kings named O'Brien; and this claim is still maintained by his descendants in this country. The prefix "O" in Ireland, it may here be remarked, is universally recognized as a distinctive mark of aristocratic descent; as are "De" in France and "Van" in Holland. The O'Briens of Ireland, did not, as might naturally be supposed, spring from the aborigines of the Green Isle, but are descended from a distinguished Milesian family of royal lineage who were among the early conquerors and rulers of Ireland. It is a fact of no little significance in connection with the claim of Morris O'Brien to kingly descent, that among the effects brought by him from his native land to this country was an old portrait of Brian Borumha (sometimes spelled Boroimhe, and pronounced Boru) one of Ireland's ancient monarchs who reigned as early as the year 978. "The surname, Boroimhe, signifying tax, was given him in consequence of the tribute in kind he levied from the various provinces. King Brian supported a rude but princely state at his chief castle at Kincora, a place in the neighborhood of the mod-

ern town of Killaloe, and he had also seats at Tara and Cashel. The vigor of his reign brought prosperity to his country. He defeated the Danes in upwards of twenty pitched battles, restricting their influence to the four cities of Dublin, Wexford, Waterford and Limerick alone. In the battle of Clontarf (1014) in which he was killed, he gained a signal victory over a united army of revolted natives and Danes, the power of the latter receiving a shock from which it never recovered." The portrait of Brian Borumha, which was sacredly cherished by Morris O'Brien, hung in his pioneer American home on the banks of the Machias river; and afterwards in the parlor of his eldest son, Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien. This portrait represented Brian Borumha as dressed in the full armor of ancient times. In the parlor of Colonel O'Brien's colonial residence was the family coat of arms, brought over from Ireland by Morris O'Brien; on the crest of which was the motto in Latin: "Vigueur de dessus"—"Strength from above." Of the ancient portrait mentioned there are several small photographic reproductions extant.

Early in life Morris O'Brien learned the tailor's trade, and for a short time, at least, worked as a journeyman tailor in his native city. About the year 1738 he emigrated to this country. There is a tradition that, owing to the commission of some political offense by him against the British Government—it may have been identification with some revolutionary movement—he was under the necessity of fleeing his native land. It is said by some that on his arrival in this country he first landed in Boston; but after careful research the author has been unable to discover any evidence in corroboration of this statement.

About the year 1738 or 1739—perhaps in the early part of

the latter year—we find Morris O'Brien in Kittery, Maine, opposite the city of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Here again he engaged in the tailoring trade. In Kittery, or in the adjacent town of Old York, Maine, about the year 1739 or 1740, he married Mary Cain, who was of the Protestant faith. Mary Cain may have been a widow at the time of her marriage to Morris O'Brien, and her maiden name may have been Mary Hutchins—certain apparently reliable data seeming to warrant this conclusion. According to what appears to be trustworthy information Mary Cain was born in this country in the year 1719—hence she was four years the junior of her husband, Morris O'Brien. If her maiden name was Hutchins, this circumstance would favor the idea that she was of American or English parentage. As a result of the union of Morris O'Brien and Mary Cain, nine children were born to them; three in Kittery—Jeremiah, Mary and Gideon—and the remaining six—John, William, Dennis, Joseph, Mary and Joana—in Scarborough. So far as the author is aware there is not the slightest evidence in support of the idea that a part of the children were born in Machias.

In the year 1745 we find Morris O'Brien a member of the military company commanded by Captain Peter Staples; and with this company he participated, under Sir William Pepperell, in the famous siege of Louisburg, which, on the 28th of June, 1745, surrendered to the combined American and English forces. In one of her recent letters to the author, a descendant of Morris O'Brien speaks of having seen in her childhood "an old cutlass which always suggested Goliath's sword to me, and which I think must have been brought by our great ancestor, Morris O'Brien, from the siege of Louisburg." "I have a photograph of a brass mortar and pestle which Morris O'Brien

brought from the siege of Louisburg,"—writes another of his descendants.*

About the year 1750 Morris O'Brien removed with his family to Scarboro, Maine. In this seaport town he again engaged in the tailoring business, having a tailor's shop at Dunstan, on the south corner of the landing road—or road leading to the landing. While residing in Scarboro he purchased land of John Alger Milliken on the post road at Dunstan. It is quite probable that while residing in Scarboro, Morris O'Brien was again in the military service, as a member of a company commanded by Captain Edward Blake.

In the year 1764, Morris O'Brien and his two eldest sons, Jeremiah and Gideon, and a few other residents of Scarboro, made a journey by water to Machias,—of which they had heard glowing accounts—for the purpose of viewing the country, with a view to permanently settling there. So well pleased was he with the prospect that in the spring of the following year (1765) Morris O'Brien and the two sons above-mentioned removed to Machias, their object being to engage in the lumber business and make a new home for the family. In the autumn of the year 1765 his entire family followed him to Machias. He seems to have settled, temporarily at least, near the eastern end of the "lower bridge," and on the southerly side of the Machias river. Soon after his settlement in Machias, Morris O'Brien and a few others began the erection of a double saw mill on the southerly side of the Machias river; and in the spring of the year 1766 it was completed and ready for operation. This was the second saw mill to be erected in Machias, and it was named the "Dublin Mill" in commemoration of the fact that Morris O'Brien, one of the principal owners, was born and bred in the city of

* Miss Annetta O'Brien Walker, of Portland, Me.



SITE OF MORRIS O'BRIEN'S HOUSE, MACHIAS, ME.

Several large stones at the left end of a narrow dark spot near the center of the picture, marks the site of Morris O'Brien's house on the gently sloping bank of the Machias river. This house, which was built about the year 1771, he occupied several years. See opposite page.

Dublin, Ireland. For the same reason the entire section of the village of Machias lying on the southerly side of the river, one of the most important in the township, has for many years borne the name of "Dublin." A few years later Morris O'Brien with a few others erected a second saw mill in Machias. He soon became one of the most prosperous lumbermen in Machias; in proof of which statement it may be said that in the year 1771 he sold his interest in one of his mills to his next eldest son, Gideon, for the snug sum (in those days) of £100. He was one of the petitioners to the General Court of the Massachusetts Colony, in the year 1769, for a grant of a Township of land; and when in the year 1770 the grant was made Morris O'Brien became one of the original proprietors of the Township, and the owner in fee of two hundred and fifty acres of land. It was probably soon after coming into possession of the land mentioned that he built, on the banks of the Machias river, about half a mile below the lower bridge, and somewhat to the east of the road leading to Machiasport, the eighteen by eighteen house required of the original proprietors.* During the few years preceding the War of the Revolution, Morris O'Brien was one of the most earnest protestants against the repeated encroachments of Great Britain upon the liberties of the American colonists; and into the hearts of his six stalwart sons he infused the spirit of Freedom. When, in the month of June, 1775, it was decided by the ardent patriots of Machias to attempt the capture of the British armed vessel *Margaretta*, Morris O'Brien, then sixty-five years of age, was prevented from active participation in the hazardous undertaking only by the earnest remonstrances of "his boys." After his eldest son, Captain Jeremiah

* In Machias, Morris O'Brien worked for a time, at least, at the tailoring trade in his own house.

O'Brien, had started down the Machias river in the *Machias Liberty* for the attack upon the British armed cruiser *Diligent* and her tender, the *Tapnaquish*, Morris O'Brien, anticipating bloodshed, procured a surgeon, and in a row boat was on his way to the scene of action when he met the captured British vessels as they were being brought in triumph by his gallant son up to Machias. That must have been a happy hour for this proud father!

In religious belief Morris O'Brien was a Baptist; whether as a result of early home training, or because of association with his wife, it may be impossible now to determine. There being no church of the Baptist persuasion in Machias, he attended the Congregational Church in the village; and when in the year 1782 the Congregational Church was regularly organized, Morris O'Brien became one of the few original members,—and his name may now be seen in the manual of the above-named church—the “Centre Street Congregational”—being number 26 on the list. The Congregational Church of Machias he attended as long as he lived; and was one of the staunch supporters, with purse and by influence, of its revered pastor, Rev. James Lyon. “The 'OBriens, I think, were all Baptists, but worshiped with the Congregationalists; and old Parson Lyon * * * * had no stronger friends than they”—says a native of historic Machias, whose acquaintance with the past is by no means meagre. Morris O'Brien died on the 4th day of June, in the year 1799, and was buried in the family burial place on the southerly side of the Machias river. His wife died in the year 1805, and her remains lie beside those of her husband. The unique inscription on the headstone of Morris O'Brien is as follows:



HEADSTONE OF MORRIS O'BRIEN

The headstone shown above marks the resting place of the remains of Morris O'Brien, the father of Colonel Jeremiah O'Brien, in the "O'Brien Burial Ground," situated on the southerly side of, and overlooking, the Machias river, in Machias, Me. For the inscription on the headstone see the close of the life-sketch of Morris O'Brien. See opposite page.

Here Lie Deposited the Remains of
Morris O'Brien
Who died June 4, 1799.
Aged 84 years.

Reader,

“Come think on me, as you pass by,
As you are now, I once was too;
As I am now so you must be,
Prepare for death to follow me.”

“*He was a useful, enterprising and patriotic citizen*”
—is the tribute paid to Morris O'Brien by a recent author.

“*I am glad you will add a chapter on the old gentleman whose strong intellect so marked his sons*”—is the tribute of another in a recent letter to the author.

Requiescat in pace.



