

**William Bainbridge**

s.l., 29 December 1812.

Manuscript, 4 pages.

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Extracts from Commodore W<sup>m</sup> Bainbridge's Journal

On board the U. S. F. Constitution

Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 1812. At Meridian was in Lat<sup>e</sup> 13.06 South, and Long<sup>e</sup> 38 West, at 10 Leagues from the Coast of Brazils. At 1.26 PM, discovered the strange sail to be an English Frigate, took in the Mainsail and Royals. Tacked ship and stood for her – At 1.50 PM, the Enemy bore down with an intention of Raking us, which we avoided by Wearing. – At 2 PM, the Enemy being within half a mile of us and to Windward and having hauled down his Colours except an Union Jack at the Mizzen Mast head, induced me to give orders to the officer of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division to fire one Gun ahead of the Enemy to make him shew his Colours, which being done brought on a Fire from us of the Whole Broadside, on which the Enemy hoisted his Colours and immediately returned our fire – A General Action with Round & Grape them commenced, the Enemy Keeping at a much greater distance then I wished, but could not bring him to closer Action without exposing ourselves to several Rakes. Considerable Maneuvers were made by both Vessels to Rake and avoid being Raked. – The following minutes were taken during the Action.

At 2.10 P.M. – Commenced the Action within good Grape & Cannister distance, the Enemy to  
Windward (but much further than I wished.)

“ 2.30 “ Our Wheel was shot entirely away

“ 2.40 “ Determined to close with the Enemy, notwithstanding his Raking, set the  
Fore & Mainsail, and Luff'd up close to him. –

“ 2.50 “ The Enemies Jib Boom got foul our Mizzen Rigging –

“ 3.00 “ The head of the Enemies Bowsprit & Jib Boom shot away by us. –

“ 3.05 “ Shot away the Enemies Foremast by the Board.

“ 3.15 “ Shot away his Main Topmast just above the Cap.

“ 3.40 “ Shot away Gaffs and Spanker Boom –

“ 3.55 “ Shot away his Mizzen Mast nearly by the Board. –

“ 4.05 “ Having silenced the Fire of the Enemy completely, and his Colours in Main Rigging being down, supposed he had struck, then hauled aboard the Courses to shoot ahead to repair our Rigging which was extremely cut, having the Enemy a complete Wreck; soon after discovered that the Enemies Flag was still flying – Hove too, to repair some of our damage. –

[2]At 4.20 P. M. The Enemies Mainmast went nearly by the board. –

“ 4.50 “ Wore ship and stood for the Enemy –

“ 5.25 “ Got very close to the Enemy in a very effectual Raking Position, athwart his Bows, and was at the very instance of Raking him when he most prudently Struck his Flag, for had he suffered the Broadside to have raked him, his additional loss must have been extremely great, as he laid an unmanageable Wreck upon the Water. – After the Enemy had struck, Won ship and Reefed the Topsails, then hoisted out one of the only two remaining Boats we had left out of 8, and sent Lieu<sup>t</sup> Parker, 1<sup>st</sup> of the Constitution to take possession of the Enemy, which proved to be H. B. M. Frigate Java, rated 38 but carried 49 Guns, and mann’d with upwards of 400 men, Commanded by Capt<sup>n</sup> Lambert, a very distinguished Officer, who was mortally wounded. – The Action Continued from the Commencement to the end of the fire, 1<sup>h</sup> 55<sup>ms</sup>. – The Constitution had 9 kill’d and 25 wounded. – The Enemy had 60 kill’d and 101 wounded certainly, but by a Letter written on board the Constitution by one of the Officers of the Java, and accidentally found, it is evident the Enemies wounded must have been considerably greater than as above stated, and who must have died of their wounds previously to being removed - The Letter states 60 kill’d and 170 wounded. –

The Java had her own compliment of men complete and upwards of 100 Supernumeraries, going to join the British Ships of War in the East Indies, also several Officers, Passengers, going out on Promotion. – The force of the Enemy in number of men at the commencement of the Action, is no doubt considerably greater than we have been able to ascertain, which is upwards of 400 men – The Officers were extremely cautious in discovering the number. – By her Quarter Bill, she had one man more stationed to each Gun than we had. -

The Constitution was very much cut in her Sails and Rigging, and many of her spars injured – At 7 P. M. the Boat returned [3] with Lieu<sup>t</sup> [Chade], the 1<sup>st</sup> Lieu<sup>t</sup>. of the Enemies Frigate, and Lieu<sup>t</sup>. General Hislop (appointed Governor of Bombay.) Major Walker & Capt<sup>n</sup>. Wood of his staff.

Captain Lambert of the Java was too dangerously wounded to be removed immediately. –  
The Cutter returned on board the Prize for the Prisoners, and brought Capt<sup>n</sup> Marshall, Master &  
in  
Commander of the British Navy, who was Passenger on board, as also several other Naval  
Officers, destine'd for Ships in the East Indies. -

The Java was an important Ship, fitted out in the completest manner, to carry Lieu<sup>t</sup>.  
General Hislop and staff to Bombay, and several Naval Officers for Ships in the East Indies, and  
had dispatched for S<sup>t</sup>. Helena, Cape of Good Hope, and every British Establishm<sup>t</sup> in the India and  
China Seas. – She had on board Copper for a 74 and two Brigs building at Bombay, and I expect  
a great many other Valuables, but every thing was Blown up in her, except the Officers Baggage,  
when we set her on fire at 3 P.M, on the 1<sup>st</sup> January 1813. (nautical time)

