

THE LAST MAN'S CLUB

By ROBERT M. CLUTCH

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THE Property of the Last Man." Emotion choked the voice of the old man as he slowly spelled the words from the age-worn label which still clung raggidly to a bottle covered with the dust of many years. A mist came before his eyes as he held the old wine up to the light, and a sigh escaped his lips as he placed it back on the table.

And this was the end! A long table, with thirty-eight plates, from which no one would eat; thirty-eight chairs, upon which no one would sit; a lonely old man seated at the head of a lonely board, drinking to the memory of his friends, all of whom he had survived.

How sad and how different from the joyous occasion which marked their organization this night sixty-four years before! He could see it just as it happened—thirty-nine young men, in the first flush of their manhood, clinking their glasses around a festive board, wild songs, gay pranks, and all joking about the poor old Last Man to be. It was youth joking about Time; hot blood and inexperience ridiculing halting footsteps and wisdom.

He recalled how they had gathered around at the midnight hour, raised their glasses high in the air and had drunk to him. And now he was to drink to them—drink of the old wine, which they had sealed with solemn rites—to take from the glass a delicious quaff and a sad memory, as he toasted their names one by one.

He recalled them all, the whole thirty-eight, beginning with active young manhood and ending with decrepit old age, as one by one in the different periods of their lives they had passed away. For five years, he remembered, they had remained intact. Then the first man died. There was a vacant chair at their next anniversary dinner, and a name was toasted in silence.

Another lapse of time, than a second went, then a third. One had mysteriously disappeared, one had been murdered, two were drowned, three killed on the railroad, and one had cheated the aims of the club by taking his own life. And then came the days of the Civil war. They were twenty-seven when the great struggle began, but four years later, when it was ended, only nineteen men answered to their names at the following anniversary dinner and the memory of the others was toasted in silence.

The roll of the living grew smaller and that of the dead larger as year after year the survivors met. From young men they had slipped into middle life, and from middle life they had become old. And now he was the Last Man. The honor was—

He stopped. The clock had begun to strike twelve. The hour for dissolving the Last Man's Club had arrived.

He listened reverently until the last lingering echo died out. Then he broke the seal of the bottle. With trembling hand he raised the glass to the tapering neck and inclined the bottle so that the crimson liquid bubbled out. He set the bottle on the table, held the glass up to the light and looked at it. Then he glanced down the length of the table until his eyes rested on a vacant chair. For a few seconds he remained silent. A flush mantled his wrinkled cheeks. A light kindled his eyes. His bent form straightened up. He brought the glass down to the level of his lips, raised it again and inclined it toward the chair upon which his eyes were fastened.

Then, in a voice trembling with emotion, he called aloud the first man's name. It was the voice of friendship ringing out across nearly three generations of time—the voice of the Last Man toasting the first.

The second man's name was called out in the same quavering voice, the glass inclined toward another vacant chair, then the third and fourth. Then two little spots glowed out on the old man's cheeks as he drank. His eyes snapped and sparkled under his bushy white brows. He became joyous, careless. He cackled and chuckled in mirth as he called his old comrades by name. More than once he made reference to some joke that had been buried and forgotten in the dim past.

The glass was emptied and filled again and again. The names were called out, incidents were delved into from the forgotten past as the old man conversed with the imaginary pictures of the men whose memory he was keeping alive.

He stopped and strained his eyes. "Why—why, there's Joe. Poor old Joe. See, Joe, I'm toasting your memory. Your memory, Joe. I'm the—"

"And there's Dick! Dick who was killed at Gettysburg. Killed with his hands on the colors. But I'd know you anywhere's. Know you even if you didn't have your uniform on. Here's to you, Dick; here's to—"

He stopped and began to sing a song in a low, cracked voice. It was a strange old song, one musty with the flavor of olden days, with queer rhymes and funny sayings. The old man's voice rose higher, his eyes sparkled brighter, his cheeks grew more flushed. Suddenly his voice became husky, rose to a screech, broke to a whisper, and stopped.

The bottle was more than half emptied now, but still the old man kept

at his solemn task. Now they were all toasted. Thirty-eight times had he raised the glass in the air, thirty-eight times had he sipped of the old wine to their memory, thirty-eight times had he called their names one by one. Thirty-eight gleams of joy, thirty-eight pangings of sorrow and it was all over. The Last Man's Club was no more.

A sense of sadness crept over him. He sat down in his chair wearily, and uttered a long-drawn sigh as his head dropped slowly on his bosom. Then the room grew dim and he closed his eyes.

A wild chorus, a confusion of familiar sounds, and a few bars of an old song awakened him. He jumped up, blinked in the light, and looked around him. The song fell upon his ears like the melody of an old poem. It awakened a whole flood of emotion in the old man's soul that held him spell-bound. He listened again. The sound came swelling from all sides, flooding his mind with reminiscences which almost made him weep. It was their drinking song, sung with a full chorus before Death had begun to step in nearly sixty years ago.

He looked down the table and gave a sudden start. He looked again. Was he dreaming? He rubbed his eyes to make sure.

Before him, seated around the board, were the thirty-eight men whose memory he had just toasted.

They were all singing—singing the same old song in the way he could never forget. It was like the voice of Yesterday reaching forth into the Present. He cleared his throat, took a long breath, and joined wildly in with the chorus. He sang the song through and stopped exhausted. He fought for his breath, gulped down a draught of wine, and rested. Then he glanced down the line of men seated around the board, looked at his own place, and stared. It was vacant! His chair was empty. It was the only unoccupied one around the board. He could not understand. He looked again. They were toasting him—the Last Man.

Weakly, he staggered over to the table. With palsied hand, he filled his glass as they did theirs, held it high in the air, and drank. The sides of the room slowly heaved before his eyes; the table became an indistinct streak of white; the thirty-eight guests blurred into two gray lines; then everything turned black. His glass fell from his hand and crashed against the chair. He reeled and swayed for a moment, extended both hands pleadingly towards the table, smiled, then fell heavily to the floor.

They found him there the next morning. The roll of the Last Man's Club was complete. He had gone to join them.

Tropic Residents Find Many Uses for Nutmeg

The nutmeg tree is one of the most useful trees in the tropic forests. An ordinary tree will yield from 1,000 to 10,000 nuts in a year. All parts of the fruit are in demand for culinary purposes, says the Family Herald. In Singapore the natives salt the husks, and in drinking saloons they are supplied for the purpose of creating thirst. A delicious preserve is also prepared from the husks.

The nutmeg is employed in medicine as a carminative stimulant, and fat from the nut—the so-called nutmeg butter—is used as an application for rheumatism. It contains from 3 to 8 per cent of a volatile oil, and the substance myristicin, which possesses narcotic properties. Cases of poisoning as a result of chewing nutmegs have been recorded—a single nutmeg seriously affecting the cerebral functions of man.

Right in His Line

A story is told of an Irishman who ran the elevator at the old Palmer house, Toronto. One morning he came down to the main floor, carelessly leaving the pit open—a man came along and fell down, hurting himself severely.

The late Dr. Andrew Smith was passing at the time, and the following conversation took place:

Irish—Hey, are you a doctor?

Doctor Smith—Yes.

Irish—Well, come in here—there is a fellow all bruk to pieces.

Doctor Smith—Well, Pat, I don't think I will do—I am a horse doctor.

Irish—Begorra, you're just the man I want because nothin' but a Jackass would fall down there anyway.

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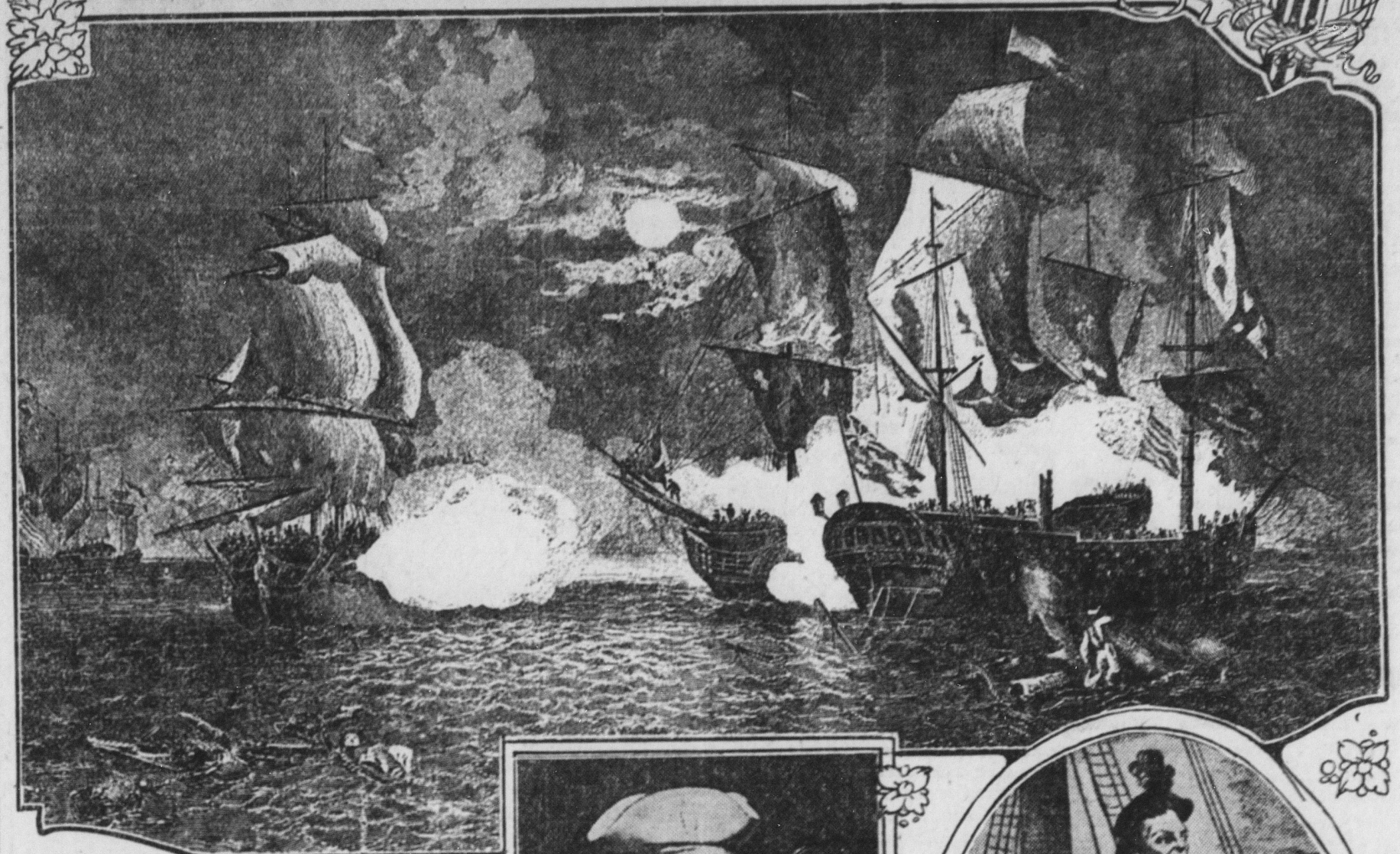
Flower Cultivation

The ancient Egyptians, Greeks, Assyrians, Romans and Chinese cultivated flowers for use and pleasure and propagated many plants. One of the most ancient examples of cultivated plants is a drawing representing figs found in the Pyramid of Gizeh, in Egypt. Authors have assigned a date varying between 1,500 and 4,200 years before the Christian era. The first notions concerning gardening were introduced into Japan by the Koreans in 604 A. D. In China 2,700 years B. C. the Emperor Chennung instituted a ceremony in which every year five species of useful plants were sown.

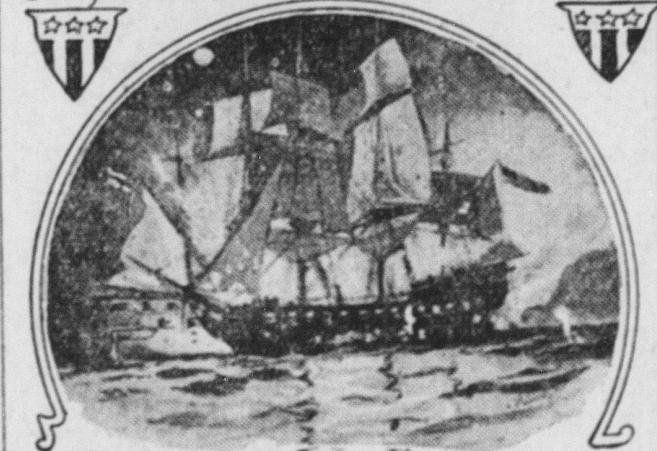
His Feelings Aroused

Husbands wrothy with their mothers-in-law sometimes resort to unusual expedients to vent their emotions. Such a one, after a word battle with his wife's mother in which he was worsted, betook himself to his club. "Say," he said to a fellow member, "have you noticed that my mother-in-law has a face like my bullterrier?" "Why, yes," the other admitted, "there is some likeness." "Take off your coat," shouted the irate one. "Nobody's going to say things against my dog and get away with it."

JOHN PAUL JONES



Serapis and Bonhomme Richard



Explosion on Serapis

Will He Make The Hall of Fame This Fall?

By JOHN DICKINSON SHERMAN

WILL John Paul Jones be elected this fall to "The Hall of Fame for Great Americans" on University Heights in New York city by the "committee of one hundred eminent citizens"? This great American sea captain failed of election in 1915 and again in 1920. The sketch that follows is not written for the purpose of furthering his election; with that the writer has no concern. Anyway, the claim of John Paul Jones to election is best set forth by his own services by the man himself, found among his papers:

In 1775 J. Paul Jones armed and embarked in the first American ship of war. In the revolution he had twenty-three battles and solemn encounters by sea, made seven descents on Britain and her colonies, took of her navy two ships of equal and two of superior force, many store-ships and others, caused her to fortify her ports, suffer the Irish volunteers, desist from her cruel burnings in America and exchange as prisoners of war the American citizens taken on the ocean and cast into prison in England as "traitors, pirates and felons."

John Paul (Jones) was born in 1747 in the County of Kirkcubright, Scotland, the son of a small gardener, John Paul. In 1750 he was apprenticed to a Whitehaven merchant engaged in the American trade, and was sent to sea. He rose rapidly, became a ship owner and by 1773 was making round voyages to the West Indies and to India. He then fell heir to the estate of his brother, William Paul Jones, a Virginia planter, who had been adopted by William Jones. John Paul thereupon added the "Jones" and settled down as a planter in America, "the country of his fond election since the age of thirteen."

The outbreak of the American Revolution found the Colonies without a navy. Congress in December 22, 1775, appointed Esek Hopkins commander in chief, with four captains. Jones was senior first lieutenant. Commander Hopkins went aboard his flagship Alfred (Black Prince, a merchant ship, armed and named for Alfred the Great) in January of 1776 at Philadelphia. Thereupon First Lieutenant Jones hoisted a yellow silk flag with the device of a pine tree and rattlesnake with the motto, "Don't Tread on Me." This was the first flag displayed on an American war vessel. The "Grand Union Flag" was also run up—thirteen stripes with the English union jack in the field.

Lieutenant Jones was soon given command of the Providence, a 12-gun brig. With her he captured 15 prizes, October 10 he was made captain and given the Alfred, a 24-gun ship, and he brought seven prizes into Boston on his first cruise.

Jones was always after congress to carry the war to British waters. Accordingly he was given a general commission as captain in the American navy and ordered to report to the American commissioners in France.

Captain Jones refitted the Ranger at Brest, France, and April 10, 1778, began that cruise of 28 days in British waters, which for daring and success are unsurpassed in the annals of naval history (see map). It was on this cruise that he fired the shipping in Whitehaven and off Carrickfergus whipped the British 20-gun sloop Drake in a square yardarm and yardarm fight, and made



As America Sees Him



As Great Britain Saw Him



Irish Sea Cruise Second Cruise in British Waters

her a prize. Thereupon John Paul Jones became a name of terror throughout the coasts of Great Britain. "Pirate" they called him then—and do in places to this day. Many apocryphal narratives of the life of "Paul Jones, Notorious Pirate" are in existence. As late as 1905 in the journal of the Yorkshire Archeological society appeared a series of letters describing contemporaneous raids with the title, "Paul Jones, Pirate." Well, it was tough—a renegade Scottish gardener's son humbling the pride of the "Mistress of the Seas" in plain sight of England, Ireland and Scotland! However, that's all over now, in these days of "hands across the sea."

Captain Jones, upon his return to Brest, asked for a larger and better ship than the Ranger, "crank, slow and of trifling force." The king finally gave him an antiquated India merchant ship, Duc de Duras, which Jones renamed Bonhomme Richard in compliment of Benjamin Franklin. The fleet with which he made his second cruise in British waters comprised Bonhomme Richard; Alliance, 32-gun American frigate; Pallas and Vengeance, converted merchantmen, and Cerf, 18-gun cutter. Jones wrote Franklin that the Richard was too old to be much use, but that he would attempt "an essential service to render myself worthy of a better and faster sailing ship." He also wrote Franklin that Capt. Pierre Landais of the Alliance was apparently a crazy man. He was a French officer and his crew was nondescript, with few Americans in it.

The squadron sailed from France August 14, 1779. By September 22 it had nearly completed the circuit of the British Isles (see map), had captured 17 vessels and thrown the entire coast into the wildest alarm. "The pirate Jones, a rebel subject and criminal of the state," was its commander's standing with the British authorities.

Then suddenly, with the Richard, Alliance and Pallas in company off Flamborough Head, appeared around the promontory a fleet of 42 sail—merchantmen convoyed by the 44-gun frigate Serapis, Captain Pearson, and the Countess of Scarborough, about the equal of the Pallas. The merchantmen scattered, the Richard and Pallas headed for the enemy and the Alliance drew off to a distance. Then followed what is probably the most remarkable naval combat in history.

Features of the murderous fight between the Richard and Serapis, from 7 to 10:30 p. m., include these: The fighting was at half pistol-shot. At the first broadside two of the 18-pounders of the Richard burst, killing their crews; the other four were thereupon abandoned. In 45 minutes the Richard's fourteen 12-pounders were disabled and she was fighting with three 9-pounders. The

moon came up. Jones ran his ship alongside the enemy to board. "Have you struck your colors?" hailed Pearson. "I have not yet begun to fight," answered Jones. The Americans lashed the ships together, bow and stern. The 18-pounders of the Serapis made matchwood of the Richard's hull. The Americans transferred their fight to the deck and rigging. An American grenade exploded a pile of ammunition on the deck of the Serapis, killing and wounding 38. The Americans prepared to board.

At this precise moment the Alliance drew close and poured several full broadsides into the Richard, killing many. She then drew off. The Richard was now on fire near her magazine and sinking. Jones released several hundred British prisoners and made them pump and fight the fire. Finally Pearson hauled down his flag. Nearly half of both crews had been killed and wounded. The Richard quickly sank.

Jones then sailed into the Texel in Holland with the Serapis, the Countess (captured by the Pallas) and his prizes. December 22, 1779, Holland asked Jones to leave. He sailed the Alliance boldly out of port in broad daylight, escaped the British blockading fleet, ran down the English channel and arrived safely in France. Captain Jones was welcomed with enthusiasm. The king gave him a gold sword and made him a Chevalier of France. Landais was dismissed from the navy and ordered to leave the country. Jones reached Philadelphia February 18, 1781. Congress tendered him a vote of thanks and gave him command of the new 74-gun ship America, then nearly completed. The Revolution was over before Jones could again get to sea.

The restless spirit of John Paul Jones then led him to seek naval service with Russia. He became a rear admiral and one of his brilliant exploits was the defeat of the Turkish navy at the battle of the Liman (1788). He quit the service because of intrigues and went to Paris, where he interested himself in the French revolution. In 1792 he was appointed American consul to Algiers, but died in Paris July 18, 1792.

The new Republic then promptly forgot all about John Paul Jones for more than a hundred years. In 1905 Ambassador Horace Porter found his body, after a long search, in the old St. Louis cemetery for foreign Protestants. His body was conveyed to the United States by an American naval squadron especially sent for the purpose. It was interred with ceremony at Annapolis. During President Taft's administration a \$50,000 statue (herewith reproduced) was unveiled in Potomac park, Washington.