

This article was downloaded by: [New York University]

On: 04 February 2015, At: 12:54

Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



The Mariner's Mirror

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rmir20>

THE RIVALS

W. Senior

Published online: 22 Mar 2013.

To cite this article: W. Senior (1911) THE RIVALS, *The Mariner's Mirror*, 1:7, 180-182, DOI: [10.1080/00253359.1911.10654516](https://doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1911.10654516)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00253359.1911.10654516>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is

expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

THE RIVALS:

BY W. SENIOR.

THE "Ship News" of the "Morning Post" for December 21st, 1813, contains the following statement:—"The *Blenden Hall* is also arrived at Plymouth, having been found at sea by the *Challenger* gun-brig, without any person on board." Unfortunately for the *Challenger's* claim for salvage afterwards, the last five words were quite contrary to the facts. The commander of the *Challenger* was (as the colloquial phrase has it) "trying it on"; and one is reminded, whilst reading the account of what really took place, of the complaints of Mr. Oxbelly in "Mr. Midshipman Easy" about a certain type of young naval officer of that period. "Some officers," he told Mr. Easy, when the ill-spoken lieutenant of the frigate had been thrown back into his boat from the *Rebiera's* ladder, "appear to imagine that because they are under the King's pennant they are warranted in tyrannising over all those who have not the honour to hoist it." And apart from a certain corroboration they afford to Marryat on this point, the adventures of the *Blenden Hall* in the chops of the Channel are worth a brief narration. The *Blenden Hall* had left Portsmouth on the 27th November, with four other merchant ships, the *Lusitania*, the *John o' Gaunt*, the *Aurora* and the *Superb*, under convoy of H.M.S. *Severn*, and was bound for Bermuda with a cargo of naval stores. In consequence of heavy weather the merchantmen lost touch with the convoy on the 2nd December, and the storm continuing until the 5th and doing "great damage" to the hull and rigging of the *Blenden Hall* and probably to the other ships, the whole five became an easy prey to the French frigate *La Clorinde*, which fell in with them on that day. It is stated that the frigate, having acquired the West Indiamen's private code from the first of them she took, made signals to the others to close, which they obeyed. However this may be, *La Clorinde*, having five more or less battered prizes on her hands, made a cartel ship of the *Lusitania*, and packing the masters and crews of the *Blenden Hall*, the *John o' Gaunt*, the *Aurora* and the *Superb*, on board of her, sent her into Plymouth, where she arrived on the 18th December. The four crewless vessels she is then reported to have scuttled or burnt; but owing, perhaps, to the Frenchman being in a hurry, the *Blenden Hall*,

at all events, survived whatever was done to her. On the 12th, after being derelict about a week, she was sighted by the post-office packet *Eliza* somewhere near the eleventh degree of West Longitude. The commander of the *Eliza* and ten of his men boarded her, and found that she had sustained a good deal of damage and was making water; nevertheless, a spirit of adventure combined probably with a shrewd recognition of her value—in the subsequent salvage action ship and cargo were valued at £72,000—prompted him to try to bring her into port. *La Clorinde* had apparently overlooked these valuable naval stores, though she had carried off the ship's compass. The *Eliza's* boat was accordingly sent back to the packet to fetch one, and returned therewith at five in the afternoon, when the *Blenden Hall* once more made sail, in company with *Eliza*, and a course was set for Falmouth. More gales and stormy weather came on, however, and now the *Eliza* was lost sight of. Then her master, who with his ten men had remained in the *Blenden Hall*, discovered that there was neither a chart nor a log, nor even so much as a watch to be found anywhere in the ship: for having boarded her in great haste he had not thought to bring any of these things with him. Still, he held to his course, E. by N., for at least he had a compass; and the vessel was cleared of water in spite of the tempestuous weather, which continued until the 14th December. Next day it was calm, and on the 16th a brig was sighted on the lee bow, which proved to be H.M.S. *Challenger*.

Thereupon started a very pretty quarrel, which was afterwards fought out in the Court of Admiralty. The *Blenden Hall* hoisted her colours, union downwards—one is rather surprised, after her other deficiencies, to find these forthcoming—in her mizzen rigging, and hove to. The skipper of the *Eliza* and his gallant ten were in no need of being rescued: they had patched up their derelict and sailed her four days on her course, besides which the weather was now fine. But they did want the chart and the log rather badly as they proceeded, and perhaps also a kindly hint as to the whereabouts of the ship, though they seem to have taken some sort of observation the day before. And so when the boat came alongside with the inevitable lieutenant, they carefully explained that all they required was to be accommodated with a log-glass, a watch, and a chart of the Channel. The lieutenant could promise nothing on his own responsibility: he suggested that the master should write a note to the captain of the *Challenger* specifying the articles of which he stood in need. The master at once complied with this formality, and explained

all the circumstances that had led to his needing them. Moreover, he offered to pay for them by an order drawn upon a Mr. Slade, an agent at Plymouth. The lieutenant returned to the brig, and was soon back at the *Blenden Hall* demanding to see the master's commission; and again it was explained that in the hurry of leaving the *Eliza* the commission had not unnaturally been left on board that vessel. The master could, however, produce the uniform buttons and other insignia, which he wore as the commander of a post-office packet, and to these he pointed; but the blindness of those who won't see is proverbial. The lieutenant reported to his commander that the officer in possession of the *Blenden Hall* had no commission, and that both he and his men were probably Americans. No other instance of Americans hanging out signals of distress to a British man-of-war in the year 1813, or steering straight for a port of their enemy, or dressing up in the uniform of the English postal service, or offering at that time to pay for goods with an order on Plymouth, has ever been recorded. Probably the commander thought this wonderful supposition of his lieutenant's would serve *ante de mieux*, and a master's mate and nine men from the *Challenger* were sent on board "to conduct" the *Blenden Hall* into Plymouth. It is not given to us all to have the courage of our suppositions, and the uniform buttons or what not prevented the *Challenger* claiming a prize; her slightly less unreasonable claim to be joint-salvor of the *Blenden Hall* was dismissed in the Admiralty Court with somewhat of a wiggling for her commander. "Those who have obtained possession of a ship as salvors," said the Court, "have a legal interest: it is not for the King's officers, or any other persons, on the ground of superior authority to dispossess them without cause." Again, "The men composing the crew of this description of vessel (a post-office packet) it is well known, are usually very expert seamen: it is to be presumed that they were as competent as any persons could be to navigate this or any other vessel." And as to the request for the chart and the other things, "It would not have been a very extravagant or heroic act of duty on the part of the King's ship to have afforded this accommodation—especially as there was public property on board." But by the time these dignified words were spoken the commander of the King's ship—good^eeasy man—was, we know, far away at sea, and as likely as not never heard the half of them.