



THE RIP VAN WINKLE OF THE NAVY DEPARTMENT IN SLEEPY HOLLOW.
 "These Privateers are really becoming annoying. I think I must buy a Tug-boat."

Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles is portrayed as 'Rip Van Winkle of the Navy Department in Sleepy Hollow,' sleeping on the shore, while John Bull (England) appears with a load of cotton in a heavily armed boat and Emperor Napoleon III (France) appears with a crate of cigars in another heavily armed boat offshore—the U.S. Navy just floats nearby in an unarmed tub and Welles lazily contemplates taking a small, inadequate responsive action against privateers. Initially, Confederates were successful in evading the Union blockade, but Welles and the Union Navy woke up and more strongly enforced the blockade. Cartoon (unsigned) published in Harper's Weekly, Volume V, No. 245, p 560, August 31, 1861.

Harper's Weekly: Civil War Naval Cartoons

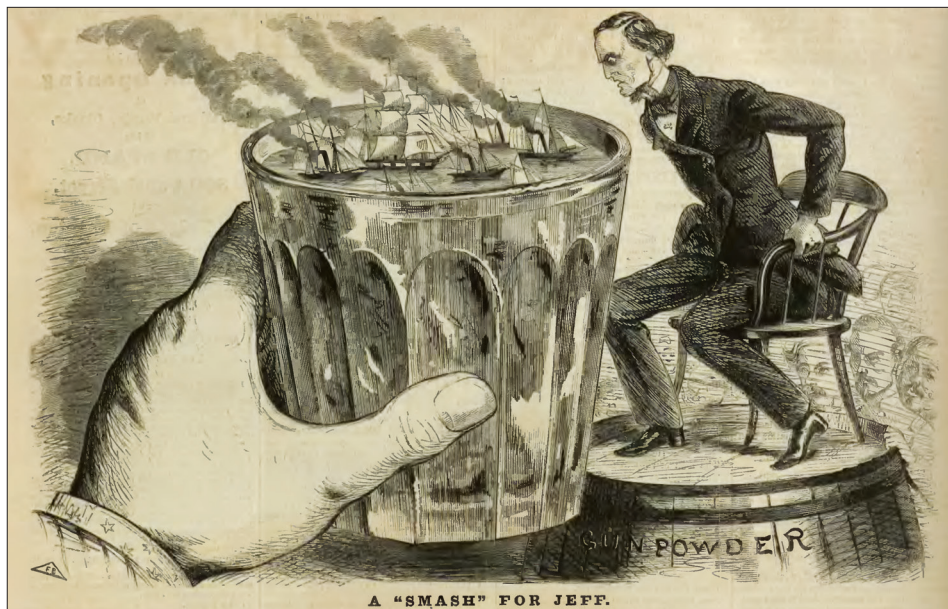
By Gary McQuarrie

CARTOONS BECAME A REGULAR FEATURE in the nation's illustrated newspapers of the Civil War, typically appearing on the back page of each issue and occasionally on an inside page of an issue. *Harper's Weekly* specifically used cartoons to support the policies of the editorial page, shaping public opinion, thwarting critics, and demanding effective leadership from the government. Though cartoons often made fun of or

critiqued individuals or Union policies, they could also be affirmative and supportive. The cartoons simplified a topic by employing caricature and symbolism with irony, puns, satire, and parody.

As in the case of wartime illustrations in the weekly newspapers, cartoons involving the Navy made up a smaller proportion of those published. *Harper's Weekly* and *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* published a

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Uncle Sam offers a “smash” (a popular cocktail of the day, made of spirits and flavored with mint) for Confederate President Jefferson Davis consisting of a great number of warships, possibly including the ‘Great Naval Expedition’ assembled at Annapolis and Fortress Monroe and heading for a secret destination (Port Royal, South Carolina), which would prove to be hard for Davis and his generals to swallow! Davis is sitting on a powder keg in trying to outwit the larger and more powerful Union Navy. Cartoon by Frank Bellew published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume V, No. 253, p 704, November 2, 1861.



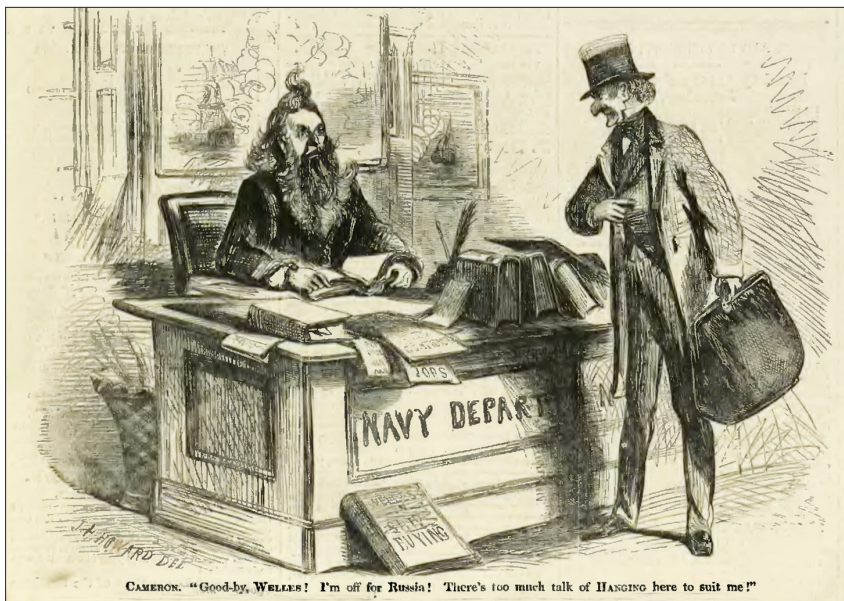
The Union organized the Stone Fleet, consisting of aging ships (mainly whaleships), loaded with stone, to sail south and be sunk as obstructions at the entrance to the harbors at Savannah and Charleston to obstruct blockade runners from providing supplies to the Confederacy (as the Union had an inadequate number of blockading vessels at the time). When the fleet arrived at Savannah, the Confederates sank their own vessels in the shipping channel to prevent the Union fleet's approach—the Stone Fleet vessels were redirected to Charleston and sunk in the main channel in late December 1861. By spring 1862, currents had removed the obstructions and rendered the effort useless. Cartoon (unsigned) published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume V, No. 260, p 816, December 21, 1861.

similar number of cartoons involving naval subjects. *Harper's Weekly* featured some of the nation's best and most influential cartoonists, including Thomas Nast (although Nast worked at *Leslie's* in the early part of the war, he also freelanced at the same time for the other weekly illustrated newspapers, and in summer 1862 joined *Harper's Weekly* as a staff artist—he usually signed his cartoons with a distinct cursive capital 'N' or as 'Th. Nast'); Frank Bellew (who signed by a small triangle or with his initials inside a small triangle)—he is credited with inventing the character of 'Uncle Sam'; Henry Louis Stephens; Frank Beard; John McLenan; and Justin H. Howard (who typically signed as 'Howard Del'). —“Del” is an abbreviation of the Latin term *delineavit*, meaning drawn by. However, many cartoons were published unsigned.

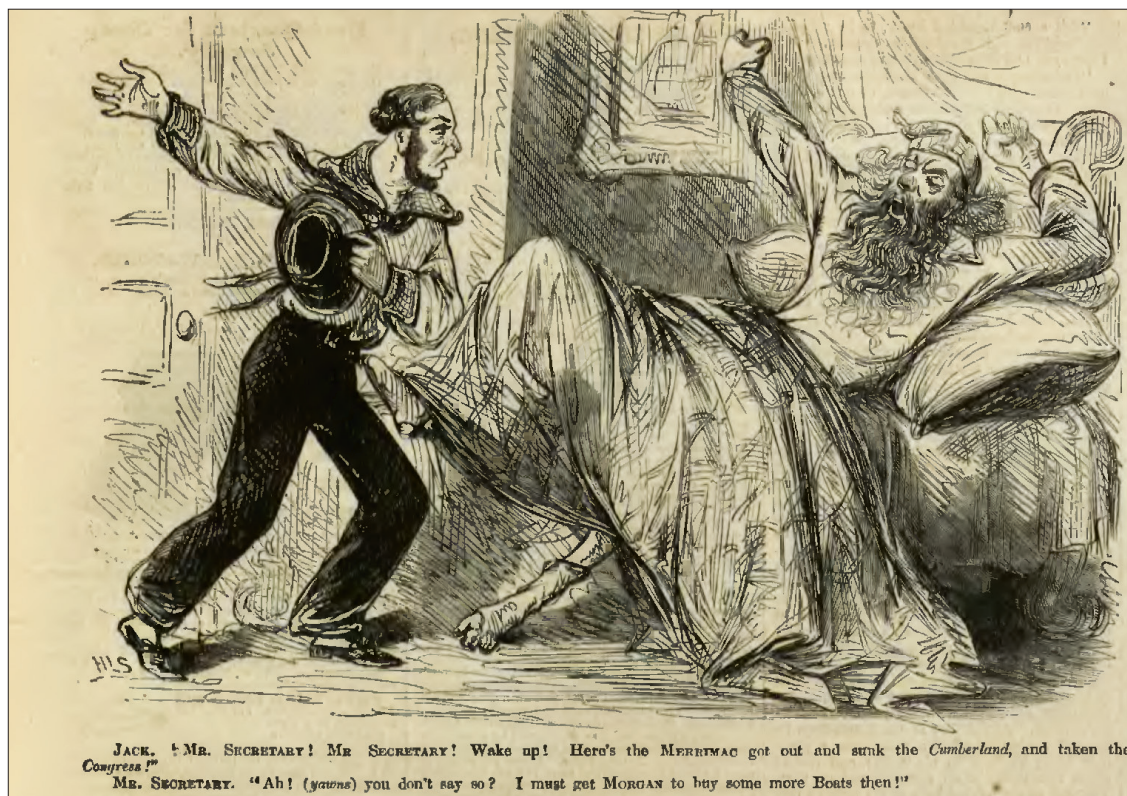
With the challenge of quickly standing up a Navy large enough to implement a naval blockade of the Confederacy and his physical appearance of wild white hair and a flowing beard lending itself to caricature, Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles was a common subject of naval-related cartoons. Welles was typically portrayed as Rip Van Winkle or Father Neptune, and as a doddering and incapable old man. In the political cartoons of the Civil War, 'Columbia' symbolized the United States and its people, named after

Christopher Columbus. She was superseded by 'Brother Jonathan,' who became 'Uncle Sam.' The English counterpart to Uncle Sam was 'John Bull,' typically a stout gentleman with a top hat and cane.

Naval-related cartoons appeared in *Harper's Weekly* principally in the first 12 months of the war. Subsequently, the establishment of a large navy and its many wartime successes apparently no longer justified a particular focus on the Navy or Secretary Welles as the war continued; the final few naval-related cartoons appearing in this illustrated newspaper during the war actually emphasized the new relative world power of the United States now having a large Navy—both the U.S. and Russia were rivaling the formerly dominant global naval capabilities of England and France. Key naval cartoons appearing in *Harper's Weekly* during the Civil War follow, along with contextual descriptions.

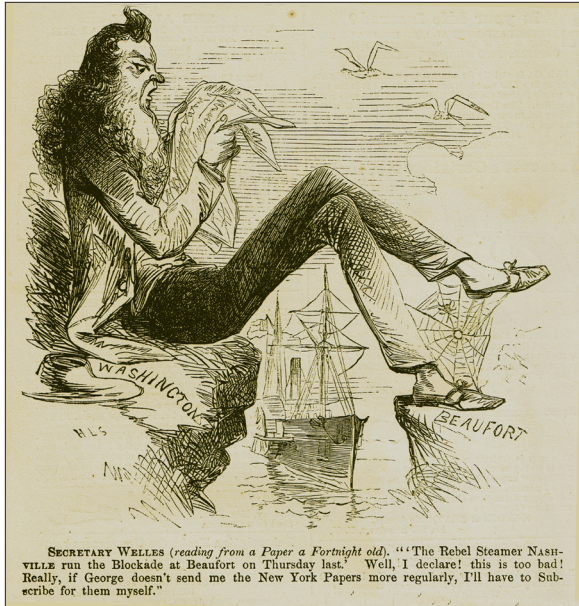


Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles listening to former Secretary of War Simon Cameron suggesting that he might travel to Russia (where he did take a minister post in St. Petersburg), with so much hanging going on! Cameron's tenure as secretary was plagued by allegations of corruption and poor management in supplying and equipping the army and he was forced to step down in mid-January 1862. Cartoon by Justin H. Howard (Howard Del) published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VI, No. 266, p 80, February 1, 1862.

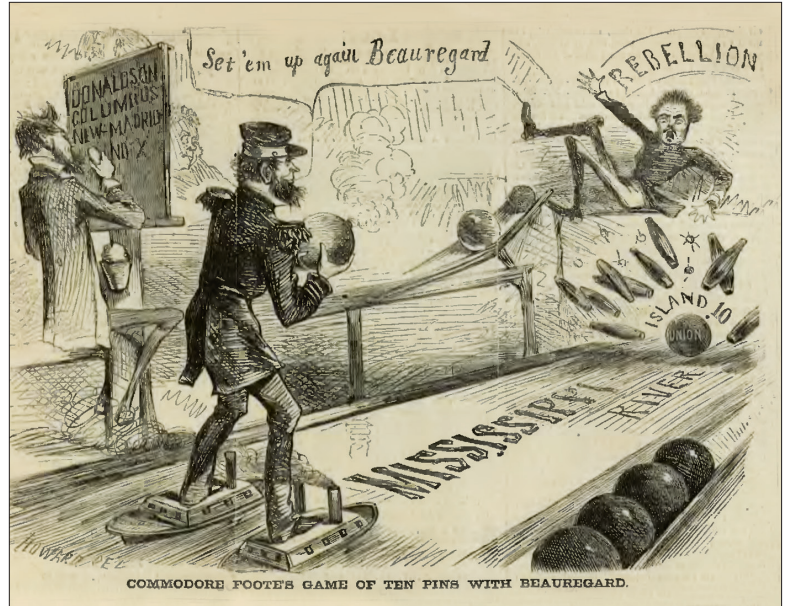


Sailor awakening the sleeping Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles to inform him that the Confederate ironclad *Merrimack* had sunk the USS *Cumberland* and taken the USS *Congress*, prompting Welles to say he must get his brother-in-law George D. Morgan, whom Welles had hired as a purchasing agent for the Navy to hasten acquisition of vessels early in the war, to buy some more ships. Cartoon by Henry Louis Stephens published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VI, No. 273, p 192, March 22, 1862.

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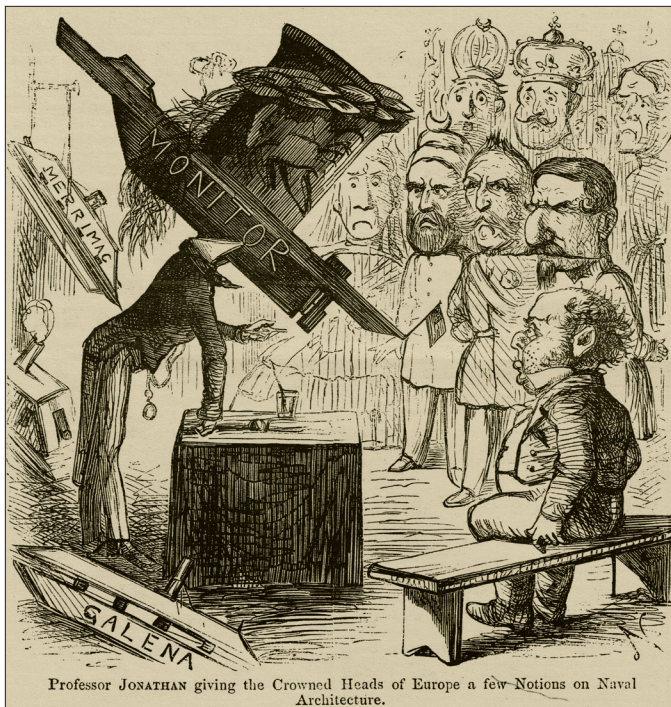
Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles reading a 2-week old newspaper (ignorant of current events, cobwebs growing between his lower legs reflecting a lack of action) reporting the rebel steamer *Nashville* readily running the blockade at Beaufort despite Union blockading efforts (right under Welles's leg). Cartoon by Henry Louis Stephens published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VI, No. 276, p 240, April 12, 1862.



Depicts Foote riding his ironclads on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers successfully bowling over (capturing) Forts Henry and Donelson, respectively, and subsequent locations southward on the Mississippi River, including Island Number 10, while General P.T.G. Beauregard and his Confederate defenses are swept away in the 1862 riverine naval campaign. Cartoon by Justin H. Howard (Howard Del) published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VI, No. 278, p 272, April 26, 1862.

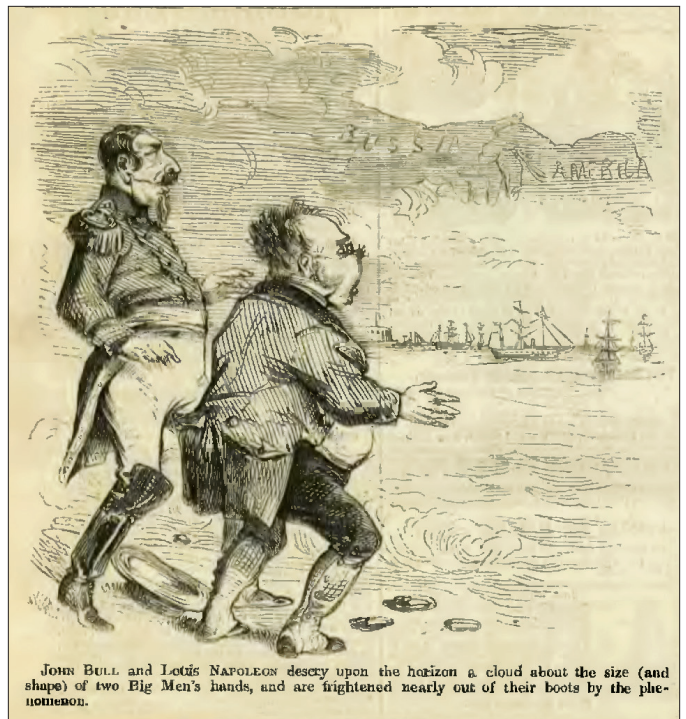


Depicts Brother Jonathan (U.S.) telling John Bull (England) in 1862 that his version of a man-o-war (an ironclad *Monitor*) is "about right!," in contrast to calling Brother Jonathan's ship in 1851 a "yacht" rather than a true man-o-war, reflecting the advances of the U.S. Navy. Cartoon (unsigned) published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VI, No. 280, p 304, May 10, 1862.



Professor JONATHAN giving the Crowned Heads of Europe a few Notions on Naval Architecture.

Brother Jonathan (U.S.) giving the Crowned Heads of Europe a few Notions on Naval Architecture. Depicts the U.S., having built the ironclad *Monitor*, as asserting a new advance and strength in shipbuilding and naval warfare. Cartoon by Thomas Nast published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VI, No. 280, p 304, May 10, 1862.



JOHN BULL and LOTIS NAPOLEON desecry upon the horizon a cloud about the size (and shape) of two Big Men's hands, and are frightened nearly out of their boots by the phenomenon.

John Bull (England) and Emperor Napoleon III (France) are frightened by the appearance of the two large navies of Russia and the U.S., thus challenging English and French dominance of the seas. Cartoon (unsigned) published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VII, No. 360, p 752, November 21, 1863.



The Mayor of New Orleans yielding to "Brute Force."

Depicts the Mayor of New Orleans, who used multiple delaying tactics in surrendering New Orleans to Union forces, as a turtle turned on its back, giving in to the brute force of the Union Navy. The Mayor had refused the "honor" of surrendering the city, and General Benjamin Butler and his troops occupied the city shortly thereafter. Cartoon by Thomas Nast published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VI, No. 281, p 320, May 17, 1862.

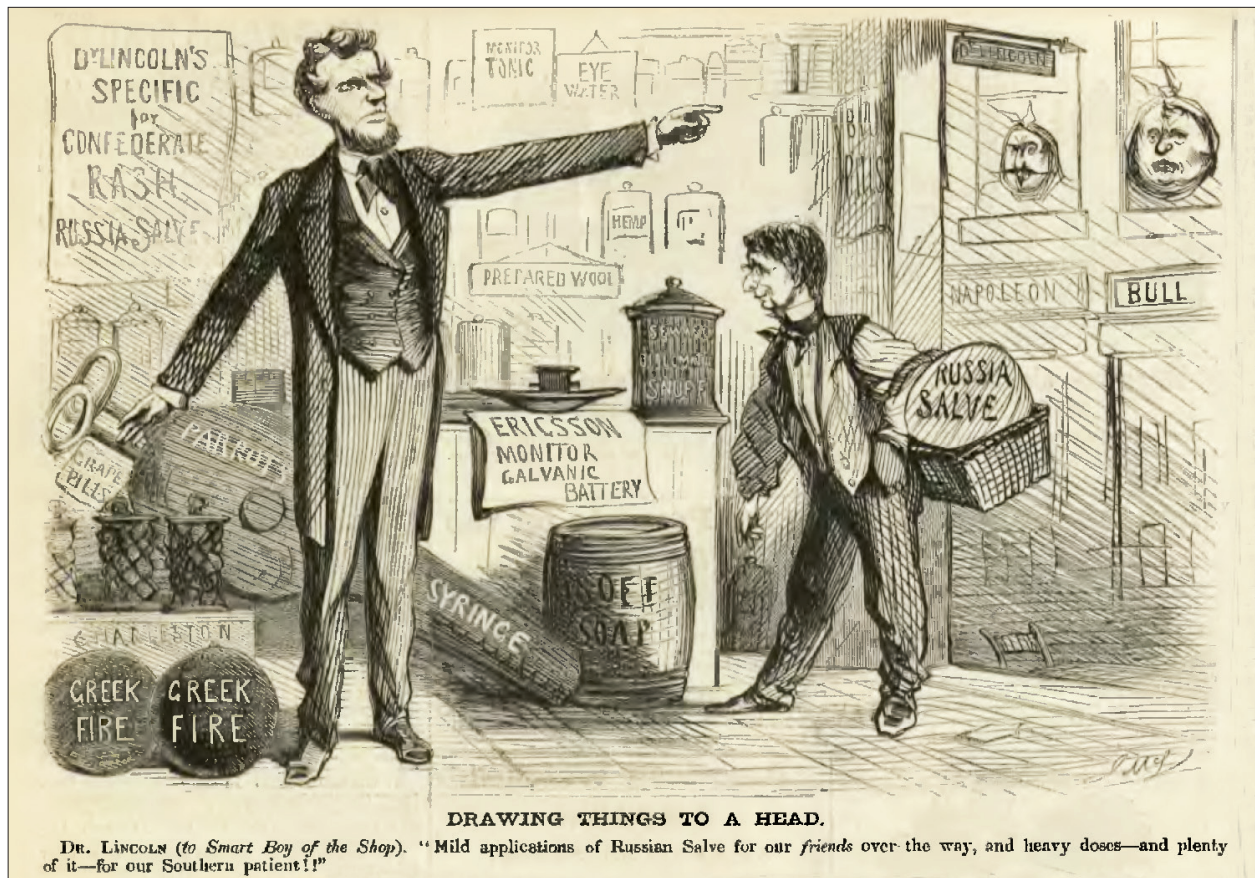


A BOBTAIL BULL IN FLY-TIME.

(Vide the Howls of the British Parliament and Papers about the *Monitor*, &c.)

Depicts the stinging of John Bull (England) and the howls of the British Parliament and newspapers as a result of the U.S. construction of the ironclad warship *Monitor*, the beginning of the end of the dominance of wooden warships such as the Royal Navy. Cartoon by Frank Bellew published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VI, No. 321, p 336, May 24, 1862.

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Depicts Lincoln's answer (growth of a powerfully armed Navy ["Russian salve"]) in response to our friends in England (who had dominated the worldwide seas with the Royal Navy) and for the Confederate 'patient' with a rash! Cartoon by John McLenan published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume VII, No. 361, p 768, November 28, 1863.



Depicts postwar Uncle Sam noting that his hands are now free, hoisting the United States flag that will fly over the seas, with plans to exert influence over a "good bit of the sea!" with the country's new large and powerful Navy, under a sun smiling upon it favorably. Cartoon (unsigned) published in *Harper's Weekly*, Volume IX, No. 437, p 304, May 13, 1865.

Sources

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