



CAPTURE OF THE HARRIET LANE.

CHAPTER XXV.

NAVAL AND COAST OPERATIONS.

The Blockade.—Capture of Fort Pulaski.—Capture of Galveston.—It is retaken by the Confederates.—Loss of the Harriet Lane and Westfield.—The Confederate Cruisers.—The Florida fitted out in England.—Runs the Blockade at Mobile.—Equipped and Escapes to Sea.—The Clarence, Tacony, and Archer.—Capture and Destruction of the Florida.—The Alabama built in England.—Escapes from Liverpool.—Takes on board Armament and Crew.—Semmes assumes Command.—His previous Career.—The Cruise of the Alabama in the North Atlantic.—Cruise in the Gulf of Mexico.—Captures the Ariel.—Destroys the Hatteras.—Cruise in the South Atlantic.—At the Cape of Good Hope.—Cruise in the Indian Ocean.—Returns to Europe.—Enters the Harbor of Cherbourg.—Destroyed by the Kearsarge.—The Results of her Depredations.—Operations in North Carolina.—Burnside recalled to the Potomac.—Foster's Expedition to Tarboro and Goldsboro.

WE have already narrated the brilliant naval exploit which insured the capture of New Orleans. The farther operations of the fleet upon the Mississippi and its tributaries will be described in their appropriate place, in connection with the military operations in the West. Vessels find their natural opponents in vessels, the cases in which they can be employed in the attack upon forts and towns being exceptional. The Confederacy being wholly destitute of a force upon the ocean, and its chief sea-ports being unassailable by a fleet, the operations of the Union fleet were mainly confined to a strict blockade of the coast, and to short expeditions up the rivers. These offensive operations were of necessity on a small scale, and though not unfrequently marked by great skill and boldness, had but little influence upon the general result of the campaign of 1862. One by one, however, the minor ports along the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico were seized, leaving to the Confederates only Wilmington, Charleston, Savannah, and Mobile, which had been rendered unassailable by a direct naval attack. These ports came to be of great importance to the Confederates, and were not captured until their armies in the field had given up, or were about to give up, the contest.

The most important of these expeditions was that which resulted in the capture of Fort Pulaski, situated on a mud island at the mouth of the Savannah River, and commanding the approach to the city of Savannah. After a series of laborious approaches, conducted at first by General T. W. Sherman, and afterward by Hunter, who succeeded him in the command of this department, Gilmore succeeded in placing batteries bearing upon the fort, but at a distance greater than a serious bombardment of a fortification had ever been attempted. There were in all eleven batteries, mounting thirty-six mortars and heavy guns, the nearest battery being 1620 yards, almost a mile, from the fort. The batteries being placed, the surrender of Pulaski was demanded on the 10th of April. Olmstead, the Confederate commander, replied that he had been placed there to defend the fort, not to surrender it. Fire was then opened, and after a bombardment of eighteen hours the walls were thoroughly breached; and the fort, having been rendered untenable, was surrendered, with forty-seven guns, a large amount of ammunition and stores, and nearly four hundred prisoners. But Hunter had not sufficient force to warrant him in making any attempt upon the immediate defenses of the town. Savannah, therefore, remained in the possession of the Confederates until captured in December, 1864, by W. T. Sherman. But the possession of Fort Pulaski by the Federals barred all direct access to Savannah by sea, and the city became of no use to the Confederates as a port by which supplies from abroad could reach them.

Galveston, in Texas, was also a port of considerable importance to the Confederates, being the main entrepôt for the commerce of a great part of the state. In May a naval force appeared at the town and demanded its surrender, but for months no effective measures were taken to enforce the demand. At last, on the 8th of October, the town surrendered, with slight attempts at resistance, to a naval force of four steam vessels under Commodore Renshaw. Banks, who had succeeded Butler in command of this department, ordered a regiment to hold Galveston; a third of it was sent, the remainder being on its way, when the Confederate General Magruder, who had just been appointed to the chief command in Texas, formed a bold plan for the recapture of Galveston, which seems to have been most negligently guarded.

The plan was carried into effect before dawn on New Year's day, 1863. Galveston stood upon a long narrow island in the bay, connected with the main land by a bridge two miles long, built upon piles. This bridge was not destroyed, and formed a ready means of approach. The town was occupied by less than three hundred men, without artillery, the naval force being supposed to be sufficient to hold it. This consisted of eight vessels, of which only two, the Westfield and the Harriet Lane, were in serviceable condition. The former, of 1000 tons, had been one of Porter's mortar fleet in the Mississippi; the latter, of 500 tons, had been built for the revenue service, of which it was the show vessel. The three infantry companies, numbering less than three hundred men, were encamped upon a wharf, a quarter of a mile from the market-place. The Westfield and the Harriet Lane were stationed in different channels down the bay, the other vessels being opposite the town. Magruder had collected a land force of five or six regiments, and several vessels. Two of these, the Neptune and the Bayou City, were protected by cotton bales piled twenty feet high upon the low decks, so that from a distance they looked like common cotton transports: they were manned by two or three hundred sharpshooters. Coming down the bay, they were perceived in the moonlight from the Harriet Lane, which steamed up to meet them. Meanwhile the land force of Magruder had swarmed across the long bridge, and in overwhelming numbers assailed the three Federal companies on the wharf; aided by the fire from the weak vessels, these held their ground for a while. As day was dawning, the Harriet Lane, steaming up the bay, encountered the Neptune and the Bayou City, the Confederate steamers striking the Federal vessel almost simultaneously on each side. The Neptune was disabled by the shock, and grounded in shoal water; the Bayou City, turning, ran again into the Harriet Lane and grappled with her. A sharp fire was then poured from both vessels into the Harriet Lane from riflemen thoroughly protected by the barricades of cotton bales; the men were driven from their guns, and the Lane was carried by boarding, her commander, Wainwright, being killed in the mêlée. This fine vessel fell into the hands of the Confederates almost uninjured, all her crew being made prisoners.

Meanwhile the Westfield had got under way, and was steaming up to the scene of conflict, when she grounded fast upon the bar, within full range of



CHART OF GALVESTON BAY.





DESTRUCTION OF THE WESTFIELD.



batteries which the Confederates had established upon the shore. The other Federal gun-boats vainly endeavored to drag her off. Renshaw, perceiving that it was impossible to save his ship, resolved to destroy her, the crew to escape in boats to the transports lying hard by. A barrel of turpentine was unheeded, ready to be set ablaze as soon as the crew were free from the vessel. Nearly all had been taken to the other steamers near by, and Renshaw, who was the last to leave, was just stepping into his boat, in which were several persons, while another, loaded to the water's edge, was putting off. By some accident the turpentine was prematurely fired; the flames spread instantly to the forward magazine, and the vessel blew up, destroying the two boats and all on board.

Meanwhile an action had been going on upon the shore. The three companies of infantry, aided by the fire of the gun-boats, repelled the attack of the Confederate regiments. But the boats were at length withdrawn to attempt to aid the Westfield. The infantry, wholly destitute of artillery, and now commanded by Confederate batteries, had no alternative but to surrender at discretion.

The immediate results of this daring enterprise were that, with the loss of 26 killed and 117 wounded, the Confederates captured the Harriet Lane, wholly uninjured, two coal-barges which were lying at the wharf, destroyed the Westfield, and secured nearly 400 prisoners. But the indirect results were still more important. The whole State of Texas came into their almost undisturbed possession, and furnished many facilities for running the blockade. This was done principally by small schooners, which took out cotton and brought back munitions of war. The supplies thus acquired were of incalculable advantage to the Confederate government during the remainder of the war.

The successful career of the Sumter had demonstrated to the Confederate government the injury which might be inflicted upon the commerce of the Union by even a few vessels of a more efficient class. The resignation of more than two hundred officers of the Federal navy gave the Confederates an abundance of skillful officers; but, having no facilities at home for constructing vessels adapted for service upon the ocean, they were obliged to have recourse to foreign builders. The ship-yards of Great Britain were open to them. The first efficient cruiser which sailed under their flag was built at Birkenhead, near Liverpool, ostensibly for the Italian government.<sup>1</sup> In spite of the remonstrance of the American minister, she was suffered by the British government to put to sea under the British flag, bearing the name of the *Oreto*. After a brief detention at Nassau she was released, and, proceeding to a little island in the Bahama group, received on board her armament, which had been brought to the place of rendezvous in a British vessel, and in August, 1862, appeared off the harbor of Mobile, still carrying British colors. Commodore Preble, who commanded the blockading fleet, hesitated to fire upon her, supposing that she must be what she professed, a British man-of-war. When he discovered his mistake, it was too late; she had got beyond effective range, and steamed up the bay to Mobile. Here she remained until January, 1863, and then, her name having been changed to the *Florida*, she was placed under the command of John N. Maffitt, once an officer in the American navy; she escaped the blockading fleet under cover of night. The first day of her cruise she made her first prize, which was pillaged and burned. In three months the *Florida* captured fifteen merchantmen in the Gulf of Mexico, all of which were burned except two, which were armed, manned, and converted into Confederate privateers.

One of these, the brig *Clarence*, was placed under the command of Lieutenant C. W. Read, not long before a midshipman in the Federal navy, who steered northward, and made several prizes, among which was the bark *Tacony*, a swifter vessel than his own. Transferring his armament and crew to this, he passed up the coast as far as Massachusetts Bay, making a score of prizes. Learning that cruisers were on his track, he again shifted his guns and crew into his last prize, the *Archer*, burned the *Tacony*, and steered for Portland, Maine, where he learned that the steam revenue cutter *Cushing* was lying. Anchoring openly and unsuspected at the mouth of the harbor, when night fell on the 24th of June he sent two boats, fully armed, up to the city. They succeeded in capturing the *Cushing* and taking her out to sea. But two merchant steamers were hastily manned by volunteers, and overtook the *Cushing*. The captors abandoned the cutter, blew her up, and took to their boats and made for the *Archer*. But the pursuing steamers were too quick; they picked up the boats, overhauled the *Archer*, and brought her crew back to Portland as prisoners.

Meanwhile the *Florida*, after cruising among the West India Islands until August, steamed across the Atlantic, and on the 4th of September entered the French harbor of Brest, where she was detained a few days by the French authorities. Released from detention, she recrossed the Atlantic, cruising along the South American coast for months, but making few prizes, for the American flag had by this time been almost driven from the ocean. At length, in October, 1864, the *Florida* entered the Brazilian harbor of Bahia. Here she was found by the Federal steamer *Wachusett*, Captain Collins. Relying upon the safeguard of a neutral harbor, Morris, who now commanded the *Florida*, was quite at ease. Half his crew were allowed to go on shore. Collins determined to cut matters short by seizing the *Florida*; this was done with scarcely a show of resistance, and the *Wachusett*, with the prize, steamed homeward; but, coming into Hampton Roads, the *Florida* was run into by a United States vessel, probably designedly, and sunk. This capture was certainly made in violation of the neutral rights of Brazil. The Brazilian government put in a formal remonstrance; the



BAHIA, BRAZIL.

justice of this was conceded so far as the special act was concerned. The American government disavowed the capture, suspended Collins from command, and ordered the prisoners to be released, but at the same time took care to enter a counter complaint against the Brazilians for harboring Confederate "piratical ships." The Brazilian government protested, apparently, as a mere matter of form, and was satisfied with the course of our government; and the overthrow of the Confederate cause, which took place while negotiations were pending, removed all occasion for pressing farther the complaint against Brazil.

Of still greater importance to the Confederate cause was the *Alabama*, whose active career as a cruiser began some months earlier than that of the *Florida*. Among the great English shipbuilders was John Laird, a member of the British House of Commons. The war had just fairly commenced when he contracted with the Confederate government to build for it a steamer which should combine all the qualities of a formidable cruiser. She was to have sufficient strength, and be provided with an armament which would render her adequate to cope with any of the largest vessels in the American navy, while her speed should enable her to escape any superior enemy which she would be likely to encounter.

While this steamer, then known simply as the "290," lay upon the stocks, her destination was notorious; but the British officials would not, and the American minister could not, furnish evidence which the government judged sufficient to warrant its interference. At length, after she was launched and ready for sea, evidence was procured which eminent British counsel pronounced sufficient to require her detention.<sup>1</sup> For a week no action was taken by the British government. The Queen's Advocate had been seized with sudden illness, and could not attend to business, and other counsel had to be consulted. Their opinion was in favor of detention, and orders to that effect were sent by mail to Liverpool;<sup>2</sup> but the Confederate agents in London learned of this, and notified their friends in Liverpool by telegraph. No time was to be lost in forestalling the arrival of the order, and on the morning of the 29th of July the "290" dropped slowly down the Mersey, under pretense of a simple trial trip.<sup>3</sup> "To give color to this pretense, to which her even then unfinished condition lent a *primâ facie* sanction, a gay party was assembled on board." There were women, friends and acquaintances of the builder, and their accompanying gallants. Luncheon and all the appliances of naval hospitality were provided. But in the midst of the feasting, at a signal from the "290," a small steam-tug came alongside, and the astonished guests were requested to step on board. All that evening and the next day the bustle of preparation went on, and, two hours before dawn, the "290" started on her seaward voyage, bound for Nassau, in the Bahamas, as her crew supposed, but really for another port. She was away just in time, for the gold-laced custom-house officials were then coming down the river with the tardy order for her detention, and, moreover, the American steam frigate *Tuscarora* was hurrying—only two days too late—to the mouth of the Mersey to intercept the Confederate cruiser, as yet wholly unarmed.

The real destination of the "290" was the harbor of Porto Praya, in the Portuguese island of Terceira, where she was to meet another British vessel laden with the armament which was to form her equipment as a vessel of war. She had sailed under the command of Captain Bullock, who had superintended her construction; but when the farthest British land was passed Bullock went ashore, and his place was taken by an Englishman,

<sup>1</sup> "Temple, July 23, 1862.—I am of opinion that the Collector of Customs would be justified in detaining the vessel. Indeed, I should think it his duty to detain her; and that if, after the application which has been made to him, supported by the evidence which has been laid before me, he allows the vessel to leave Liverpool, he will incur a heavy responsibility—a responsibility in which the Board of Customs, under whose directions he appears to be acting, must take their share. It appears to be difficult to make out a stronger case of infringement of the Foreign Enlistment Act, which, if not enforced on this occasion, is little better than a dead letter. It well deserves consideration whether, if the vessel be allowed to escape, the Federal government would not have serious grounds of complaint."—R. P. COLLIER, Q. C.

<sup>2</sup> Diplomatic Correspondence, 1862-3, i., 163.

<sup>3</sup> "The Cruise of the *Alabama*, and the *Sumter*." This work is made up mainly from the journals of Semmes, and was evidently drawn up under his supervision. This has been followed almost exclusively in the following account, all quotations, unless otherwise expressly credited, being taken from it, although it has not been thought necessary, in all cases, to cite the pages. The work will be cited simply as "*Semmes*."

<sup>1</sup> "Our collector at Liverpool states that he has every reason to believe that the vessel is for the Italian government."—Earl Russell to Mr. Adams, Feb. 22, 1862.





RAPHAEL SEMMES.

"Captain J. Butcher, late of the Cunard service. Of the other temporary officers, three out of five were Englishmen." The crew numbered about seventy men and boys, and were shipped for a feigned voyage, the Confederate captain "trusting to the English love of adventure to induce them to re-ship when the true destination of the vessel came to be declared."<sup>1</sup> In nine days the "290" reached Porto Praya. Soon after arrived a British vessel, the *Agrippina*, with coal, ammunition, and guns, and, not long after, still another British vessel from Liverpool, having on board "a number of seamen, shipped, like those on board the "290," for a feigned voyage, in the hope of inducing them to join when the ship was fairly in commission."<sup>2</sup> In this vessel also came Raphael Semmes, who had been appointed to command the "290" when, under a new name, she was to appear upon the ocean as a Confederate cruiser.

Semmes, now about fifty years of age, was a native of the State of Maryland. He had entered the American navy thirty years before. At the outbreak of the war he had attained the rank of commander in the navy, was a member of the Light-house Board, and resided at Washington. He wrote to Stephens, of Georgia, indicating his willingness to fight for the South, but did not wish to thrust himself upon the new government "until his State had moved." On the 14th of February, 1861, he received a telegraphic dispatch from the Chairman of the Naval Committee at Montgomery inviting him to repair to that place. Then, and not before, he sent in his resignation from the United States navy, and telegraphed back to Montgomery that he was "a free man to serve his struggling country." He had before this taken occasion to write to an Alabama Congressman, giving his views "of the situation of the Confederates, as regards their marine, for defense and means of inflicting damage on their opponents." Leaving his family at Washington, Semmes repaired to Montgomery, where he was soon dispatched to the Northern States to make "large purchases, and contracts for machinery and munitions, or for the manufacture of arms and munitions of war." The Confederate Secretary of the Navy had learned that there were for sale, "at or near New York, two or more steamers of speed, light draught, and strength sufficient for at least one heavy gun." In April Semmes was recalled to New Orleans, and placed in command of the *Sumter*,<sup>3</sup> whose career as a cruiser has already been narrated.

On the 24th of August, the "290," still under British colors, had received her armament, and was thus transformed into a man-of-war, and steamed out of the neutral port. When fairly a maritime league from land, and thus, according to international law, in the open sea, the common domain of all nations, Semmes, in full uniform, appeared on deck, and announced that the vessel was henceforth the Confederate States steam-ship *Alabama*. At the instant down came the British flag, and in its place appeared that of the Confederacy. The new commander made a speech to the men who had been entrapped on board under false pretenses, urging them to enlist with him, telling them that the main purpose of the cruise was to prey upon American commerce, which would give them abundance of prize money. The crew were a motley gang, all British, swept up "from the grogeries of Liverpool," in the belief that they were shipping in a sort of privateer, where they would have a jolly good time and a plenty of license.<sup>4</sup> "The

modern sailor," says Semmes, "has greatly changed in character. He now strikes for pay like a sharper." Semmes was glad to hire them upon their own terms. "I was afraid," he says, "that a large bounty in addition would be demanded of me."<sup>1</sup>

On the 29th of August the *Alabama* was fairly in trim to begin her cruise. The battle of Groveton was at that hour being fought, and the result hung in even scales. The *Alabama* had now assumed her true character. She was a wooden screw steam sloop, bark-rigged, of 1040 tons burden, provided with two engines of great power, pierced for twelve guns on deck, with two heavy guns amidships; her whole cost for building and equipment was a quarter of a million of dollars.<sup>2</sup> To man her fully required at least one hundred men; Semmes had only eighty, but he trusted that he could fill up the complement by volunteers from the prizes which he should make.<sup>3</sup>

The *Alabama* now steered straight for the great highway of commerce between Europe and America. This was reached in a week, and on the 5th of September she made her first capture. On that day the Confederate army crossed the Potomac into Maryland. "This vessel," notes Semmes in his journal, "was of course taken possession of, her crew brought on board the *Alabama* and placed in irons, and a quantity of rigging and small-stores transferred to the captor. Next morning the prize was fired, the *Alabama* having taken from her thirty-six prisoners."<sup>4</sup> The *Alabama* was now in the track of commerce, and within the next ten days captured half a score of vessels. The journal of Semmes describes the disposition made of some of them:

*September 7.* Captured the *Starlight*, from Fayal to Boston, with a number of passengers, among others some ladies. "Brought on board all the United States seamen, seven in number, including the captain, and confined them in irons." *September 9.* Several additional prizes having been made, "about 9 A.M. fired the *Starlight*; at 11, fired the *Ocean Rover*; and at 4 P.M., fired the *Alert*." *September 14.* "Captured a whaler, the *Benjamin Tucker*, from New Bedford, eight months out, with about 340 barrels of oil; crew thirty. Brought every body on board, received some soap and tobacco, and fired the ship." *September 16.* Captured another whaler; stood off to Flores; when within four or five miles, sent all the prisoners, sixty-eight in number, ashore in boats, and then, "having taken the prize some eight or ten miles distant from land, hove her to, called all hands to quarters, and made a target of her. The practice was pretty fair for green hands. At dark fired the prize." After this burst of good fortune there was a lull of a fortnight. The *Alabama* was crowded with prisoners taken within the last few days. "These," says Semmes, "were hard times for the prisoners, crowded together on deck, with no shelter but an extemporized tarpaulin tent between them and the pelting of the pitiless storm, which drenched the decks alternately with salt water and fresh."<sup>5</sup>

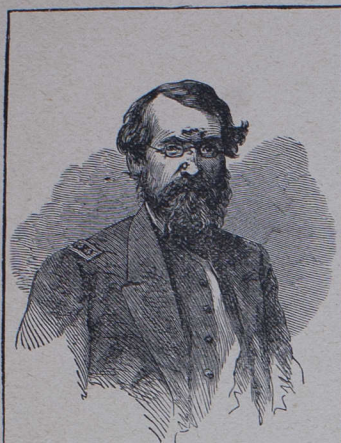
October passed, and at its close the *Alabama*, having in the mean time made twenty-seven captures, was off the American coast, hardly two hundred miles from New York. Semmes had hoped to lie off the harbor, and make some prizes at its very mouth; but his fuel was now running short, and he was obliged to run southeastward to the island where coal was to await him. On the 18th of November the *Alabama* made the French island of Martinique. Here she fell into sore peril, for the American steamer *San Jacinto*, of superior force, appeared off the harbor, and instituted a close blockade. But the *Alabama* managed to elude her antagonist under cover of darkness, and gained the coal rendezvous at the island of Blanquilla.

In the latter days of November the *Alabama* had got on board coal sufficient for nearly three weeks' steaming, and was ready for a fresh cruise. She made for the West India Islands, hoping to be able to intercept one of the treasure-ships conveying gold from the Isthmus to New York. A million of dollars in gold was a prize worth waiting for. On Sunday, December 7, a prize came within sight, though not the one which had been hoped for. A huge side-wheel steamer hove in view, pressing southward. It could be only a California steamer, bound southward, not northward; toward the Isthmus with passengers, not from it with gold. The *Alabama* shot from her lurking-place, and made way to cross the track of the stranger, who bore the Union flag. The *Alabama*, now carrying the same, was evidently taken for an American vessel. But as the steamers came within gun-shot, the stars and stripes fell from the *Alabama*, and the Confederate flag took their place, while a blank shot demanded a surrender. The warning was not heeded; the chase held on her way with full press of steam. But a shell from the *Alabama*, striking the foremast, showed that she was within the power of her enemy, and, abandoning all effort to escape, she rounded to and surrendered. The prize proved to be the *Ariel*, a California steamer bound from New York to the Isthmus, having on board 500 passengers, besides 140 Federal marines, on their way to join the Pacific squadron.

The *Alabama* was embarrassed by the magnitude of her prize. There was much which was of use: three boxes of specie, a 24-pound rifled gun, a few rifles and swords, and a thousand rounds of ammunition. The *Ariel* also would make a bonfire as brilliant as any of the twoscore with which Semmes had already illuminated the ocean. But this could not be lighted until the hundreds of prisoners were disposed of. The narrow deck of the *Alabama* could not give even standing-room for half of them. Semmes kept his prize by him for a couple of days, hoping to fall in with a home-ward-bound California steamer, to which he would transfer his crowd of prisoners, and then burn the *Ariel*; but none appearing, he determined to take her toward Kingston, Jamaica, land the prisoners in boats, and then burn the ship. But, learning that the yellow fever was raging at Kingston, and unwilling to put a crowd of men, women, and children ashore in a

<sup>1</sup> Semmes, i., 277.<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, i., 283.<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, i., 1-8.<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ii., 33.<sup>5</sup> Semmes, i., 297.<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, i., 266.<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, i., 298.<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, i., 306.<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, i., 305, 320.





HOMER C. BLAKE.

plague-stricken port, he had no alternative but to release the Ariel upon bond, and "forego the pleasure of making a bonfire of the splendid steamer that had fallen into his hands."

The Alabama was still cruising among the West India Islands when intelligence came that Banks was about to dispatch a great naval and military expedition from New Orleans to the coast of Texas, Galveston being its immediate destination. Semmes was aware that this expedition "would be accompanied by one or more armed vessels, but the principal portion would be composed of troop-ships crowded with the enemy's soldiers; and should the Alabama but prove victorious in the fight, these transports

would be of more practical importance than all the grain and oil ever carried in a merchantman's hold."<sup>1</sup> At noon on the 11th of January the Alabama was off Galveston, ignorant that the place had been recaptured by the Confederates, and the proposed Banks expedition delayed. Several vessels were seen lying off the bar. One of these, the gun-boat Hatteras, catching a glimpse of the Alabama on the distant horizon, stood out to reconnoitre. The Alabama edged slowly seaward, in order to draw this vessel away from her consorts, so that in case of a conflict the noise of the guns would not reach them. The rate at which the Hatteras had approached showed that she was in speed no match for the Alabama, which could thus escape if she perceived that she was overmatched in strength. Just after dark the Hatteras came within hailing distance, and from her deck came the inquiry, "What ship is that?" "Her majesty's ship Petrel. What ship is that?" was the reply from the Alabama. "I will send a boat aboard," was answered by Lieutenant Blake, the commander of the Hatteras, who gave orders accordingly, and the boat was lowered and put off. Up to this moment the commander of the Hatteras must have supposed that the Alabama was what she proclaimed herself, a British vessel, for he would have scarcely sent a boat on board what he believed to be an armed enemy. Hardly had the boat left the side of the Hatteras when a new hail, "We are the Confederate steamer Alabama," was heard, accompanied by the whizzing of a shell over the deck, followed by a full broadside. The Hatteras returned the fire, and endeavored to close, hoping to carry the enemy by boarding. But the greater speed of the Alabama enabled her to thwart the attempt, while her superior armament placed her opponent at her mercy. The only chance for the Hatteras was that a shot might strike some vulnerable point of the Alabama. In a few minutes a shell from the Alabama entered the hold of the Hatteras amidships; almost at the same instant another passed through the sick-bay, and exploded, both setting the vessel on fire, while another destroyed the steam cylinder, disabling the engine, and rendering the Hatteras wholly unmanageable. On fire in two places, utterly disabled, a mere wreck upon the water, there was nothing for Blake to do but to fire a lee gun in token of surrender, and to ask for assistance for his crew. The action had lasted only thirteen minutes, and the Hatteras was rapidly sinking. The boats from both vessels were employed in conveying the crew of the vanquished to the deck of the victor. Two minutes after the last man had left the Hatteras she went down, bow first, with her pennant at the mast-head, carrying with her every thing but the living men. The Alabama suffered some injury, but not sufficient to cripple her, and had two men slightly wounded. On the Hatteras two were killed and five wounded; the boat's crew which had put off just before the action rowed back to the shore, only twenty miles distant; all the others, more than a hundred, were made prisoners, and carried to Kingston, where they were put ashore.

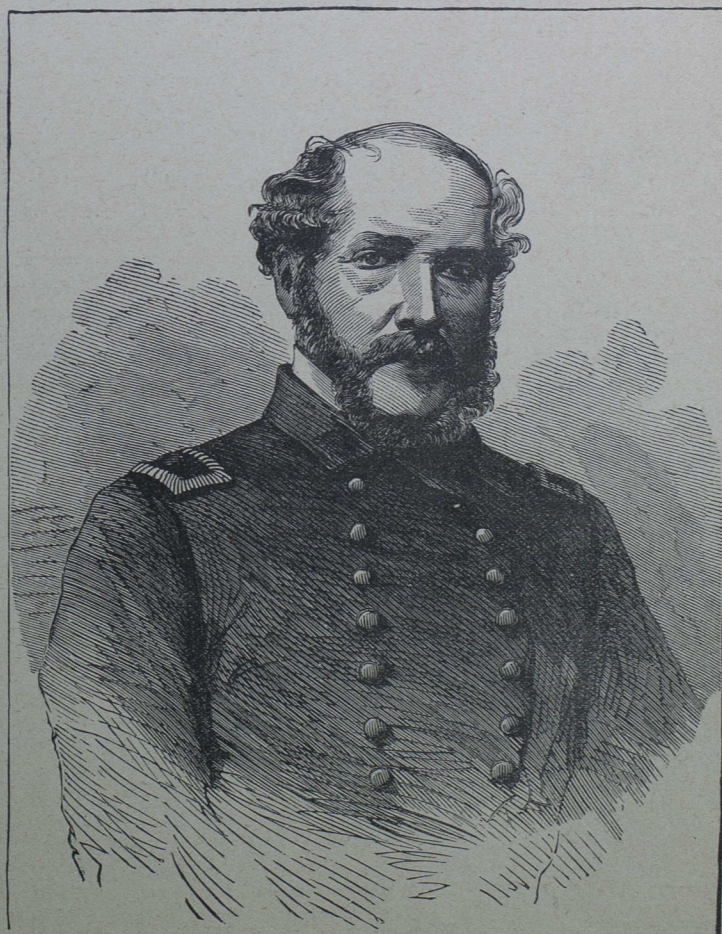
For two months the Alabama cruised among the West India Islands, and then, about the middle of March,<sup>2</sup> went southward along the coast, reaching Bahia, in Brazil, by the middle of May, making many prizes all the while. Here she found the Georgia, another Anglo-Confederate cruiser; took in coal, and, after being repeatedly warned by the Brazilian authorities that her stay was not desired, steamed away across the South Atlantic for the coast of Africa, making port near Cape Town on the 5th of August. She hovered in these waters for more than a month. Coming into the harbor of Simon's Town on the 16th of December, she found evil tidings: Vicksburg and Port Hudson had fallen; Lee, foiled at Gettysburg, had recrossed the Potomac into Virginia. "Our poor people," he writes, "seem to be terribly pressed by the Northern hordes; but we shall fight it out to the end, and the end will be what an all-wise Providence decrees." But, what was still worse for the Alabama, the Union steamer Vanderbilt, of superior force, which had been sent to look for the Alabama, was in the neighborhood. She had left the very harbor where the Alabama was, only five days before, and might return at any moment. The Confederate cruiser must go to another cruising ground. The Malay Archipelago was chosen, and, after a fortnight's run through heavy gales, the voyage of 3000 miles was accomplished early in November. But the American war-steamer Wyoming was in these waters, and the Alabama must be wary in encountering an adversary of superior force. The cruise among the intricate channels of the Indian Archipelago lasted three months. Few prizes were taken, for the American flag had almost disappeared from these waters. On the 13th of January<sup>3</sup> the Alabama set her head homeward, toward Great Britain, by

way of the Cape of Good Hope. The Cape was reached, after a rough voyage, on the 11th of March. Here Semmes got into a controversy with the governor for a breach of neutrality in bringing a prize into that port. The case was decided against him, and, entering a protest against the "unfriendly disposition of a government from which, if it represents truly the instincts of Englishmen, the Confederates had a right to expect at least sympathy and kindness in the place of rigor and harshness,"<sup>1</sup> he turned the head of the Alabama toward Europe on the 25th of March. For a month not a single vessel was encountered. On the 22d of April "the guano-laden ship Rockingham was boarded, taken possession of, employed as a target, and then set fire to." Five days after, the Tycoon shared the same fate. This was the last prize taken by the Alabama. Nineteen other vessels were overhauled before the cruiser, a fortnight after, entered the French harbor of Cherbourg, but not one of them sailed under the American flag.

The Alabama entered Cherbourg on the 11th of June,<sup>2</sup> and began to make some repairs, of which she stood in need after her long cruise. Three days after, the American steam-sloop Kearsarge, Captain Winslow, which had been cruising in the British Channel, looking out for several vessels apparently designed for the Confederate service, appeared off Cherbourg. The vessels were as nearly as possible equal in size and armament. Semmes, who wished to signalize himself by some exploit other than the burning of helpless merchantmen, requested Winslow to remain off the port for a day or two, when he would come out beyond neutral waters and give battle. Winslow, nowise loth to fight, complied with the request, and lay off the port. On the 19th the Alabama came out, escorted to the limit of the neutral waters by the French iron-clad Couronne. Following close after, fortunately as it happened for the Confederates, was an English steam yacht, the Deerhound, whose owner, Lancaster, wished to treat his family to the sight of a naval duel. When the neutral marine league was fairly passed, the Couronne turned back, leaving the expectant combatants to themselves. The Kearsarge edged slowly off as the Alabama advanced, wishing to make sure that the action should take place so far off shore that there should be no question about the line of national jurisdiction. The distance of seven miles from land having been gained, the Kearsarge turned, and steered straight for the enemy. The Alabama opened fire at the distance of a mile, repeating her broadsides three times. The shot passed harmlessly through the rigging of the Kearsarge, which kept head on toward the Alabama. At nine hundred yards the Kearsarge sheered round and delivered her broadside. This broadside told fearfully. Then, fearing that the Alabama would make for the shore, and take shelter in French waters, Winslow put his vessel to full speed, designing to run under the stern of the Alabama and deliver a raking fire. To counteract this, the Alabama also sheered, presenting her broadside instead of her stern. Both vessels being under full steam, the Alabama, in order to keep her broadside toward her enemy, and at the same time to avoid coming into close action, was forced to describe a series of circles around the Kearsarge, whose object was to come into close action. The Kearsarge, whose object was to gain a raking position, followed the course of the Alabama, and the combined result was that the two vessels

<sup>1</sup> Semmes, ii., 435.

<sup>2</sup> 1864.



JOHN A. WINSLOW.

<sup>3</sup> Semmes, ii., 42.

<sup>1</sup> 1863.

<sup>2</sup> 1864.





DESTRUCTION OF THE ALABAMA.

described a series of circles around each other; but the Kearsarge, having a slight advantage in speed, was able to diminish the orbit. The action lasted an hour. From the first the superiority of the aim of the Kearsarge had been apparent. At the seventh revolution around the shifting common axis, the Alabama perceived that victory was hopeless, and she headed for the shore, five miles distant. If she could accomplish but two of these, she would be within French waters.<sup>1</sup> But the attempt at retreat came too late.

<sup>1</sup> It has been asserted that both commanders wished to fight the action at short range. The compiler of the Confederate account says (*See mes*, ii., 290): "Captain Semmes had great confidence in the power of his Blakeley [7-inch] rifled gun. He wished to get within easy range of his enemy, that he might try this weapon effectively; but any attempt on his part to come to closer quarters was construed by the Kearsarge as a design to bring the engagement between the ships to a hand-to-hand conflict between the men. Having the speed, she chose her distance, and made all thoughts of boarding hopeless. It was part of the plan of Captain Semmes to board, if possible, at some period of the day, supposing that he could not quickly decide the question with artillery. It was evidently Captain Winslow's determination to avoid the old-fashioned form of a naval encounter, and to fight altogether in the new style; his superior steam power gave him the option."—Captain Winslow, on the other hand, says: "It was soon apparent that Captain Semmes did not seek close action. I became then fearful lest, after some fighting, that he would again make for the shore. To defeat this, I determined to keep full speed on, and with a port helm to run under the stern of the Alabama, and rake, if he did not prevent it by sheering and keeping his broadside to us. We adopted this mode as a preventive, and, as a consequence, the Alabama was forced, with a full head of steam, into a circular track during the engagement. The

The Alabama was disabled, and the Kearsarge, steaming ahead, took a raking position across her bows. The white flag of surrender was raised; a boat from the Alabama came alongside, bearing an officer, who said that the Alabama had surrendered, and was fast sinking. The boats of the Kearsarge were lowered to save the drowning enemy. The British *Deerhound* also approached, and was requested by Winslow to aid in the rescue of those who had now become his prisoners. The Alabama was going down; the officers and crew took to the water. Forty of them, among whom was the captain, were picked up by the *Deerhound* and carried to England; a dozen were saved by French pilot-boats and taken to Cherbourg; seventy

effect of this manœuvre was such that, at the last of the action, when the Alabama would have made off, she was near five miles from the shore; and had the action continued from the first in parallel lines, with her head in-shore, the line of jurisdiction would no doubt have been reached. . . . I had endeavored to close in with the Alabama, but it was not until just before the close of the action that we were in a position to use grape; this was avoided, however, by her surrender. . . . Nearly every shot told fearfully on the Alabama, and on the seventh rotation on the circular track she winded, setting fore-trysail and two jibs, with head in-shore."—Nothing can be more clear than that neither commander expected to decide the fight by the "old-fashioned form" of boarding. Such was the character of each vessel, and the armament of the other, that long before they could have come side by side, one or both must have been disabled. Each knew the armament of the other, and each considered his own to be superior.





A NIGHT ENCAMPMENT.

were rescued by the Kearsarge. Of the crew of the Alabama seven were killed in the fight; nineteen, most of whom were wounded, went down with the vessel. On board the Kearsarge there were three wounded, one mortally.

The life of the Alabama had been two years lacking nine weeks, counting from Sunday, August 24, 1862, when she first hoisted the Confederate flag, down to Sunday, June 19, 1864, when she was sunk, leaving not a wreck behind. No one ship that ever floated ever inflicted such injury upon an enemy. In all, she had captured sixty-five vessels, burning all except the few required to save the lives of her prisoners. She had destroyed vessels and cargoes valued at ten millions of dollars, and, what was of more injury to the enemy, had well-nigh driven the American commercial flag from the ocean. She was to all intents a British vessel, built at a British dock, manned by a British crew, and sailing almost always under the British flag. Her keel was never wet in Confederate waters, and no man from her deck ever caught a glimpse of the shores claimed by the Confederates; and she rarely hoisted the Confederate flag, except when, having decoyed a prize by the show of false colors, she raised her own in the act of making a prize. Her long impunity from capture is not a matter for wonder. The whole wide ocean was her hiding-place. A hundred vessels might be in search of her, and it would be a matter of chance if one would encounter her. If heard from to-day at any point, to-morrow she would be hundreds of miles away, in what direction no man not on board of her could know. "Her stay in any neutral harbor was necessarily as short as the perching of a hawk on a bough. Like the hawk's in upper air, the Alabama's safety, as well as her business, was on the high seas."<sup>1</sup> At the very last, it was a mere matter of accident that the Kearsarge was at hand when the Alabama appeared at Cherbourg. No one supposed that she was then on this side of the globe. The last that had been heard of her she was in the Indian Ocean. Even at Cherbourg she might have declined to enter into combat with the Kearsarge. Safe while she remained in the neutral harbor, she might have waited her time, as she had done at Martinique, when watched by the San Jacinto, and again, fitted for sea, have crept out into the wide

<sup>1</sup> Semmes, ii., 280.

ocean. But Semmes wished to signalize himself by something more than the capture of defenseless merchantmen, and knowing that the ships were "equally matched," he challenged the Kearsarge to the contest. It was supposed that Semmes would soon be again at sea in command of a still more powerful vessel than the one which he had lost. This was iron-clad, and was almost completed by the builders of the Alabama; but the British government had now perceived the danger into which they were rushing by their interpretation of the neutrality laws, and took possession of the ship. Semmes, after a while, made his way to the Confederacy, and received the nominal rank of brigadier general in the army, and as such was, a year after, included in the surrender of Johnson's army.

The brilliant success which attended the early operations of Burnside at the commencement of the year has been already recorded.<sup>2</sup> The successive captures of Roanoke Island, Newbern, Elizabeth City, Fort Macon, and Beaufort, gave the Union forces command of the greater part of the coast of North Carolina, and of the Sound by which it is bordered. Wilmington, and the intricate approaches which lead to it, remained to the Confederates, and afforded facilities for running the blockade. It was supposed that these successes would be followed up by a march into the heart of the state, which would seize the lines of railroad connecting the far South with Richmond. But Burnside's force of 15,000 was insufficient for such an enterprise, and the exigencies of the campaign in Virginia left the Federal government no troops by which he could be re-enforced. The most that Burnside could do was to hold the points on and near the coasts which he had seized. When McClellan retreated from the Chickahominy to the James, Burnside was ordered to bring to Fortress Monroe all the troops which he could collect,<sup>3</sup> leaving Foster with just enough to garrison Newbern, Beaufort, and a few other points. The Confederates also brought all their available force from North Carolina to Virginia; so that, during the summer and early autumn, there was little fighting in North Carolina.

When Lee's invasion of Maryland had failed, and the Union and Confederate armies lay confronting each other on the Rappahannock, considerable re-enforcements were dispatched to Foster in North Carolina, so that he was able to assume the offensive. Early in November he pushed an expedition inland toward Tarboro, where he had learned that there were a few regiments of the enemy; but, finding that they had been largely re-enforced, he retreated. In December he planned a still more important enterprise, the main object being to reach Goldsboro, and destroy the railroads centering at that point. The Confederates meanwhile had strengthened their force in the Department of North Carolina. In November they had but 9000 men, of whom 6000 were reported as present for duty. By December these numbers were fully doubled, and Gustavus W. Smith was placed in command. After the wounding of Johnston at Fair Oaks, Smith had been placed in command of the army before Richmond. He had held it hardly for a day when he was struck down by an attack of paralysis, and Lee was appointed in his place. Foster left Newbern with his entire movable force,<sup>4</sup> about 10,000 strong, and encountered no serious opposition until he reached Kingston, half way between Newbern and Goldsboro. Here a sharp fight occurred,<sup>5</sup> the Confederates retreating. Foster pressed on toward Goldsboro,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, ii., 278.<sup>2</sup> *Ante*, pp. 242-249.<sup>3</sup> July 4, 1862.<sup>4</sup> Dec. 11.<sup>5</sup> Dec. 14.

BATTLE OF KINGSTON, DECEMBER 14.

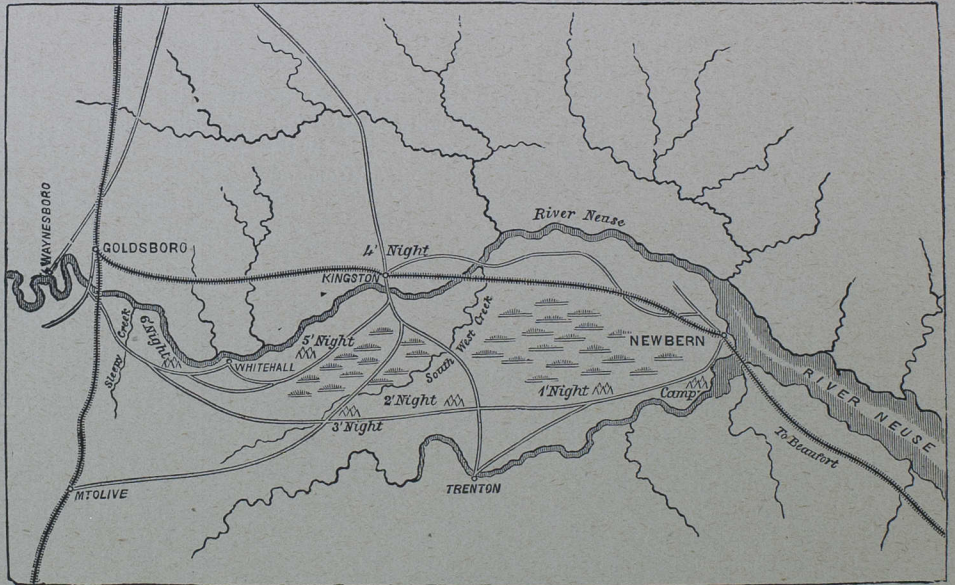




ACTION AT WHITEHALL, DECEMBER 16.

hoping to strike the railroad. On the 16th he reached Whitehall, where a brisk skirmish ensued; the Confederates were driven back, and two gunboats which were there building were destroyed. Foster then pushed on toward Goldsboro, following the course of the Neuse, and sending detachments in various directions to destroy the railroad bridges. On the 17th another skirmish took place at a point near Goldsboro. In the meanwhile the Confederates had gradually concentrated a superior force at Goldsboro, and Foster found it unwise to attempt to reach this place, the point at which he had aimed. He therefore commenced a rapid retreat to Newbern, where his force arrived on the 24th, having been absent ten days, during which time it had marched nearly two hundred miles. Foster lost 90 killed and 478 wounded; the Confederates lost 71 killed, 268 wounded, besides 476 prisoners, most of whom were captured at Kingston, and immediately paroled. The expedition really accomplished nothing. The slight injury done to the railroad was soon repaired, and the communication between Richmond and the far South was hardly interrupted. With this attempt closed the active operations for 1862 in North Carolina. But in February of the ensuing year the Federal force was considerably strengthened, and Lee, perceiving that military operations on the Rappahannock would be suspended until spring, ventured to detach Longstreet, with a considerable part of his corps, from the army in Virginia, and send him to North Carolina. In March the Confederate force in this department nominally numbered 73,000 men, with a loss of 700. But the siege of Charleston forms an episode so complete in itself as to require a separate chapter.

During the year various movements looking toward a siege of Charleston were attempted. The most important of these was an attempt on the 16th of June to take possession of James Island. The Federals were repulsed,



ROUTE FROM NEWBERN TO GOLDSBORO.

with a loss of 700. But the siege of Charleston forms an episode so complete in itself as to require a separate chapter.



SKIRMISH NEAR GOLDSBORO, DECEMBER 17.





COURSE OF THE MISSISSIPPI FROM CAIRO TO THE GULF.