

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE ATLANTIC SQUADRONS.

THE first step in the establishment of the Atlantic blockade was the proclamation issued by Commodore Pendergrast, still in command of the Home Squadron at Hampton Roads. The only effective blockade then existing was maintained by the Cumberland, and such other vessels as had been hastily collected, in the neighborhood of Fortress Monroe. In carrying out the plan, it was decided to put the whole force on the Atlantic coast under one command, and Commodore Stringham was accordingly appointed flag-officer commanding the Atlantic Blockading Squadron. The Minnesota, which had been laid up in ordinary at Boston, was assigned to him as flagship, and on the 13th of May he arrived at Hampton Roads, and entered upon his command.

The instructions sent to Stringham on May 1 will serve to show exactly the views of the Department in its first efforts to establish the blockade. They were as follows :

“The President, by Proclamation of April 19, 1861, ordered a blockade of the ports within the States of South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas; and by a supplemental Proclamation of the 27th of April, 1861, he extends the blockade so as to include the ports of Virginia and North Carolina. In pursuance of the laws of the United States, and of the Law of Nations, in such cases provided, it becomes necessary that a competent force be posted so as to prevent the entrance and exit of vessels from the ports aforesaid.

“With this view you will establish and enforce a blockade at each and all of the ports in the States enumerated east of Key West, and a sufficient disposable force will be placed under the command of yourself that you may carry these orders into effect. On you will devolve the duty of blockading all the ports east of Key West. You will duly notify neutrals of the declaration of blockade, and give to it all the publicity in your power. The blockade must be strict and absolute and only public armed vessels of foreign powers should be permitted to enter the ports which are placed in a state of blockade. To neutral or foreign vessels, that are already in the ports, you will allow a reasonable number of days to leave them. The country relies upon your command, with the squadron of the Gulf, to make this blockade effectual, so as to close all of the ports of the States above named, protect our commerce from the depredations of privateers, and contribute, by your activity and vigilance, to the speedy suppression of the insurrectionary movements and the adjustment of the present unhappy difficulties. It will not be improper to state to you that a lawful maritime blockade requires the actual presence of an adequate force stationed at the entrance of the port, sufficiently near to prevent communication. . . . You will permit no neutral or foreign vessel proceeding toward the entrance of a blockaded port to be captured or detained if she shall not have previously received from one of the blockading squadron a special notification of the existence of the blockade.

“This notification must be inserted in writing on the muster-roll of the neutral vessel, by the cruiser which meets her; and it should contain the announcement, together with statements of the day and the latitude in which it was made.

“The United States have at all times maintained these principles on the subject of blockade, and you will take care not to attempt the application of penalties for a breach of blockade except in cases where your right is justified by these rules.”

The following additional instructions were issued May 4 :

“The Department would in every instance allow at least fifteen days for vessels to depart with or without cargo after the blockade is set with a sufficient force. Notice should be given, by such extended publicity as you can command, at each and every port as soon as the blockade is established.

“Commodore Pendergrast will inform you of the condition of affairs and orders received. He will also assist with the Cumberland in enforcing the blockade for the present.

“I need not enjoin vigilance and promptness to prevent privateering and depredations.

“There are several vessels in the waters of the Chesapeake to aid you, and others which are being equipped will soon arrive out and report. The names, officers, crews, and armaments of these vessels are not yet reported in full to the Department, in consequence of the haste and activity necessary to get them afloat at the earliest moment.

“Some of the vessels can, it is believed, aid in blockading the Mississippi and Mobile. But much must be committed to your judgment and discretion.

“Commodore Mervine will shortly proceed to the Gulf with the [steamer] Mississippi, and other vessels will be speedily despatched to reinforce the blockading squadron, and close Galveston and other ports.”

No time was therefore lost in making a beginning. But for the first three months it was only a beginning; and at some points it cannot be said to have gone so far as that. The Niagara, under Captain McKean, had arrived at Boston, April 24, and was sent to New York for necessary repairs. These were hurriedly completed and she proceeded to Charleston to set on foot the blockade at that point. She arrived at her post on May 11. After lying off the bar four days, and warning several vessels “off the whole Southern coast,” for which, as already mentioned, the Government afterward paid heavy damages, she was directed to proceed to sea to intercept certain shiploads of arms and munitions of war, which were known to be on their way from Europe to New Orleans or Mobile. The Niagara touched at Havana, and later joined the Gulf blockade. The Harriet Lane was off Charleston on the 19th, and cruised for some days near that part of the coast; but the blockade in reality was raised, for the port remained open until May 28, when the Minnesota

arrived. On the same day the blockade of Savannah was established by the Union, a steamer which had been chartered at Philadelphia five days after the President's first proclamation was issued. At the beginning of July, the Atlantic Squadron comprised twenty-two vessels, but most of them were stationed in Hampton Roads or were cruising at a distance from the coast.

The line of operations of the Atlantic Blockading Squadron began originally at Washington, and extending down the Potomac River and the Chesapeake, passed out to sea between the Capes, following the coast to Key West. The boundary was afterward fixed at Cape Canaveral.

Upon this line there were three principal points of blockade, Wilmington, Charleston, and Savannah. They became centres of blockade in the beginning, because of their commercial importance; and the first two remained so until the end, because they offered peculiar advantages to blockade-runners, and were capable of defence almost to the last against attacks by sea.

The different stretches of coast that lay between and outside the blockade centres had peculiar features of their own. Between Washington and Hampton Roads lay the military frontier. The blockade in the Potomac River was therefore largely devoted to the restriction of communication between the two shores, and to keeping open the water-approaches of the capital; and the work of the Potomac flotilla was of a kind by itself. Below the Potomac lay the mouths of the Virginia rivers, near the upper waters of which were the great battlefields of the war; and the naval operations carried on in this neighborhood were always subsidiary to the movements of the army.

The Potomac flotilla was organized in May, 1861, under the command of Commander James H. Ward, and formed at first

a part of the Atlantic Blockading Squadron. On May 31 Ward attacked the Confederate batteries at Acquia Creek, in the steamer *Freeborn*, assisted by the other vessels of the flotilla, the *Anacostia* and *Resolute*. The shore batteries were silenced, and the enemy retreated to their works on the heights. This was the first naval engagement of the war. On the next day, the *Pawnee*, under Commander Rowan, was sent down from Washington, and the attack was renewed, the *Pawnee* joining in the bombardment with her heavy battery.

On June 27, Ward made a landing at Matthias Point with a small party of men. He was accompanied by Lieutenant Chaplin of the *Pawnee*. His object seems to have been to clear away the woods on the point, which afforded shelter to the enemy; but he underestimated the force opposed to him, and he had hardly landed, when a body of troops, numbering four or five hundred, came over the brow of the hill to attack him. Ordering the men to lie off in their boats, Ward returned to the *Freeborn*, and opened fire on the advancing column. Chaplin landed his handful of men a second time, and threw up a breastwork; but about this time Ward was killed while sighting his bow-gun, and the fire from the vessel ceased. In consequence of this accident, signal was made to Chaplin to return; but the enemy had now advanced within two hundred yards, and opened a galling fire upon the party. Chaplin collected his men and sent them to the boats, waiting himself until the last. When he came to the beach, only one man remained with him, and the boat had drifted out. But Chaplin, who was a man of uncommon character, was unwilling to bring it back under the enemy's fire; and as the man who was with him could not swim, Chaplin took him on his shoulders, musket and all, and swam out with him to the boat.

After Ward's death, Commander Craven succeeded to the command of the flotilla. Occasional brushes with the enemy took place, schooners were cut out or burned, and the river was kept open until the end of October, when the heavy batteries thrown up on the Virginia shore made it impassable.

Early in 1862 the Confederates withdrew from their positions along the river. The work of the flotilla in the Potomac during the remainder of the war, under its successive commanders, Wyman, Harwood, and Parker, was chiefly confined to the suppression of the small attempts at illicit traffic which are always found along a frontier of belligerent operations. In the other Virginian rivers the flotilla at the same time took part in active operations, in connection with the movements of the army and the protection of transports and supplies.

Outside the Chesapeake the real blockade service began. A little to the south of the Capes is found the double coast which extends as far as Wilmington. The peculiar conformation of the coast consists of a long narrow belt of sand, jutting out in three prominent headlands, Cape Hatteras, Cape Lookout, and Cape Fear. The sand-belt is broken at intervals by shallow inlets. Within it lie the two Sounds, extensive sheets of water, upon whose tributary rivers are a number of more or less important towns. Below Wilmington the coast sweeps in, describing a long curve, at the southern extremity of which, in a deep recess, lies Georgetown. At this point the shore begins to assume the insular character which is so well defined below Charleston. From here to Fernandina it forms a series of low swampy islands, separated by narrow rivers and arms of the sea, making an intricate network of water-courses. At intervals the groups of islands are broken by large estuaries at the mouths of rivers. There are five of these between Charleston and Savannah—

Stono Inlet, North Edisto, South Edisto, St. Helena, and Port Royal. Below Tybee Roads, the entrance to Savannah, the same formation continues, with six important sounds—Wassaw, Ossabaw, St. Catherine, Sapelo, Dobby, and Altamaha. Brunswick is the only town of importance in this region, with an entrance at St. Simon's Sound. From St. Simon's the line of islands and sounds continues, including St. Andrew's, Cumberland Sound at Fernandina, St. John's, and St. Augustine. Below this point, the coast of Florida consists of narrow reaches of sand enclosing long lagoons, only broken by small and infrequent passes. In the whole extent of the South Atlantic Squadron there were twenty or more of these small inlets, in each of which it was necessary to keep a vessel, if the blockade was to be rigidly maintained.

During the summer of 1861 great efforts were made by the Confederates to show that the blockade was inefficient. It was commonly spoken of in their newspapers as "the paper blockade," and steps were taken by foreign governments, and especially by that of Great Britain, to ascertain its true character. The *Gladiator*, an English cruiser, commanded by Captain Hickley, whose name is an all-sufficient guarantee of the accuracy of his reports, made two cruises of observation off the Atlantic coast, at the beginning and at the end of July. On his first cruise, after a careful search, he could find nothing in the shape of a blockader between Cape Henry and Cape Fear. The force in Hampton Roads was composed of the *Minnesota*, *Roanoke*, and *Susquehanna*, the sailing-frigate *Santee*, the *Cumberland*, and the steamers *Anacostia*, *Dawn*, *Daylight*, and *Quaker City*. On his second cruise, the eastern entrance of Wilmington was still open, as were the inlets to the northward; but four vessels, the frigate *Roanoke*, the small steamer *Albatross*, and two sailing-vessels, the *St. Lawrence* and the *Savannah*, were cruising off

the coast. Hickley did not round Cape Fear on his second cruise; had he done so, he would have found one vessel off the mouth of Cape Fear River. This was the steamer Daylight, which arrived on the 20th of July, and immediately notified the commanding officer of Fort Caswell of the establishment of the blockade.

Notwithstanding the very inadequate force on the station, the vessels of the squadron acted upon the assumption of the existence of an efficient blockade. On July 16, the British brig Herald, two days out from Beaufort, was captured by the St. Lawrence, on the edge of the Gulf Stream, two hundred miles from land. The Department ordered the release of the Herald, but she was detained by the court, and finally condemned. Three days earlier, Pendergrast, then in command of a projected "West India Squadron," was lying at Charleston, and published anew his proclamation of April 30, announcing an efficient blockade of Virginia and North Carolina, and repeating the warning that he had a sufficient naval force "here" (that is, at Charleston) for the purpose of carrying out the proclamation. Proclamations, however, even though they may be of questionable validity, are not entirely without effect. Hickley reported that trade on the coast of North Carolina was stagnant; and, as has been already said, regular commerce was for the time being actually stopped by the original proclamation of the President. In the months of June, July, and August forty-two vessels entered and cleared at Wilmington, but nearly all were small coasters. The arrivals at Charleston, from June 1 to December 1, numbered one hundred and fifty vessels of the same description. Most of these entered at some of the numerous side channels to be found in the network of inlets in the neighborhood of the port. Indeed, vessels made the inshore passage from Charleston to Fernandina without

interruption as late as the end of July, 1861, and perhaps later. The *Wabash* and *Vandalia* were at this time off Charleston, and the *Jamestown* and *Flag* off Savannah. These vessels, though hardly fitted for the work, nevertheless made the blockade legally efficient at the main entrances of these two ports. But the intermediate points, on the coast of South Carolina and Georgia, and the whole inland passage, as far south as Fernandina, were entirely without a blockade of any kind.

The increase of the blockading forces, and the gradual extension of the blockade, led to a division of the duties of the station. The North Atlantic Blockading Squadron, including the coast of Virginia and North Carolina, was assigned to Flag-Officer Goldsborough, who assumed command on September 23. Flag-Officer Dupont was appointed to the South Atlantic Squadron, from the northern boundary of South Carolina to Cape Florida, and hoisted his flag in the *Wabash* on October 29. Goldsborough remained in command just a year. He was relieved September 5, 1862, by Acting Rear-Admiral Lee, who retained the squadron for two years. The later blockade of Wilmington was brought to a remarkable state of efficiency, through the untiring efforts and zeal of the officers of the squadron. In the last year of the war, when the expedition against Fort Fisher was decided on, the command of the North Atlantic Station was offered to Farragut, and, upon his declining it, Porter was appointed. Porter entered upon his duties October 12, 1864, and Lee was transferred to the Mississippi.

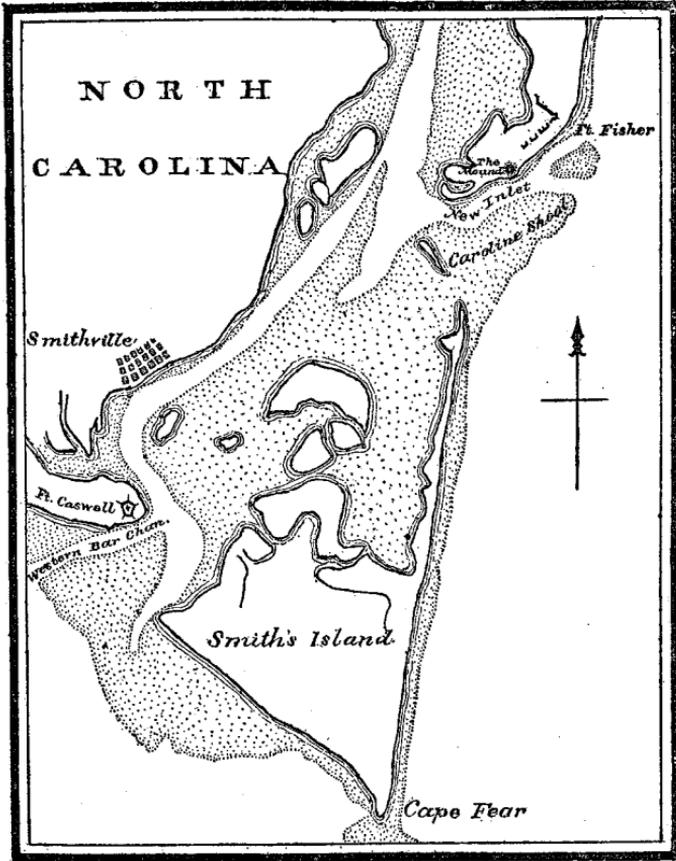
The first step in the conversion of the blockade of the North Atlantic coast into a military occupation was the capture of the forts at Hatteras Inlet, by Stringham, with a small body of troops under General Butler, August 29, 1861. This was followed, in February, 1862, by the expedition of

Goldsborough and Burnside against Roanoke Island, and the active operations conducted subsequently by Rowan in the Sounds. The most important points in the interior waters of North Carolina were then occupied, and the small commerce in the Sounds came to an end. After a while Beaufort became the centre of occupation, though the headquarters of the squadron and the station of the flagship continued for a long time to be at Hampton Roads.

On the 20th of July the steamer *Daylight* took her station off the mouth of Cape Fear River. With this diminutive force began the famous blockade of Wilmington—the port which later in the war became the scene of the most brilliant successes of the blockade-runners and the most strenuous efforts of the blockaders. The town is situated on Cape Fear River, about twenty-eight miles from its mouth. There are two entrances to the river, one from the eastward, called New Inlet, the other from the southward at the river mouth. The entrances are not more than six miles apart in a straight line; but between the two lies Smith's Island, a long strip of sand and shoal, with the headland of Cape Fear projecting far out at the southern extremity. Continuing the line of Cape Fear, the dangerous Frying Pan Shoals extend out ten miles farther, making the distance by water between the two entrances little short of forty miles.

Each of the channels was protected by strong works, and each required a separate blockading force. Smithville, a small town on the Cape Fear River about equidistant from the two entrances, was the point of departure of the blockade-runners. Dropping down from Wilmington to this place, they could here await their opportunity and take their choice between the main channel and New Inlet, whichever seemed at the moment most favorable. Neither presented any serious difficulties to the navigator, though vessels entering from

the south were occasionally caught on "the Lump," a round shoal in the channel. To the north of New Inlet, on Federal



Entrances to Cape Fear River.

Point, was Fort Fisher. Fort Caswell overlooked, in the same way, the mouth of the river. Each of the blockading squadrons, obliged to keep out of range of the forts, was

stationed in a semicircle, ten miles or more in length, with its extremities near the shore. The forts kept a sharp lookout, and if a stray blockader ventured in too far, he was quickly apprised of it by a shell, and made to keep his distance. The blockade-runners, sighting the land toward evening, would wait outside until it was dark, and then, making a dash at full speed through the fleet, would be under the guns of the fort in a twinkling, and safe from capture. Such a port, so protected, it was almost impossible to close, and fast vessels could slip in past the most vigilant force. Accordingly it was at Wilmington that blockade-running maintained itself longest and most actively, after it had nearly ceased elsewhere. In 1863-64, it was at its height; but toward the end of the latter year it began gradually to decline. Even after the first attack on Fort Fisher, a few vessels succeeded in passing in and out with impunity; and the practice only came to an end when the fort succumbed.

The improvement in the efficiency of the Wilmington blockade was partly due to the increase in the number of vessels, and partly to a better understanding of the exigencies of the service. In August, 1862, one of the blockade-running captains reports that the vessels of the inshore squadron carried lights at their peaks all night; and the same captain states a year later that a portion of the fleet remained at anchor during the night. On the other hand, Admiral Lee, describing the blockade of the same port in October, 1864, says that the smaller vessels were kept as near the bar and batteries as the state of the weather, the light, and their draft would allow. These were pressed in by a line of larger vessels, and these again by the divisional officer, moving along the line. Vessels of the outer line which discovered blockade-runners were allowed to chase, but those on the inner line were re-

quired to keep their station. All the vessels were kept under way all night. In the summer of 1864, the headquarters of the squadron were removed from Hampton Roads to Beaufort. In the fall the blockading force at the two entrances numbered fifty steamers, some of them the fastest in the service. Nowhere was the work of the blockade more arduous and difficult than at Wilmington. The squadron captured or destroyed sixty-five steam blockade-runners during the war; and yet they continued to effect an entrance. The result only shows that the absolute locking-up of a well-fortified port, whose trade offers powerful inducements to commercial enterprise, is an actual impossibility.

It was during his service on this station, while in command of the *Monticello*, that Cushing performed two of those dare-devil exploits which gave him a name and a fame apart in the history of the war. The first of these took place in February, 1864, while the *Monticello* was blockading the mouth of Cape Fear River. On the night of the 28th, Cushing fitted out two boats, and taking with him Acting-Ensign Jones, Acting-Master's Mate Howarth, and twenty men, he proceeded past the fort and up the river to Smithville. His object was to land at the town, capture the commanding officer, and board any vessels he might find in the harbor. It was an enterprise hardly worth the risk, for the danger was great, and the capture of a dozen commanding officers at such posts as Smithville would not compensate for the loss of one Cushing. Still, Cushing's coolness and audacity would counterbalance almost any risk, and he had no idea of being lost on this occasion.

The party reached the town, and landed in front of the hotel. Concealing his men under the bank, Cushing proceeded to capture some negroes, from whom he obtained the information he wanted; then, taking with him the two officers

and a seaman, he walked to General Herbert's headquarters. On the opposite side of the street were the barracks, in which the garrison was quartered, numbering about 1,000 men. Unfortunately, the General was out, having gone to Wilmington. Cushing entered the house with his party and captured an engineer officer. The Adjutant-General was also in the house, but went off in haste to the woods, and neglected to call out the garrison. Cushing returned quietly with his prisoner to the boat, passing within a few yards of the sentry on the wharf. A few minutes after he had embarked the alarm was given, and signal was made to Fort Caswell that boats were in the harbor; but the party had passed the fort before it could open fire.

The second expedition was made in the following June. Cushing had received permission from Admiral Lee to attempt the destruction of the Confederate ram Raleigh, supposed to be lying in the river. On the night of the 23d of June, he left his ship, the Monticello, in the first cutter, with Jones and Howarth, the same officers that had accompanied him on his previous expedition, and fifteen men. Pulling up the river, the party passed the forts and the town of Smithville. Meantime the moon had come out, and when about fifteen miles from the mouth of the river, they were discovered by sentries on the bank. Making a feint of going back, Cushing doubled as soon as he reached the shadow of the opposite bank, and continued on his course. Toward morning, when within seven miles of Wilmington, he landed and hid the boat in a swamp. The boat's crew remained all day in concealment, watching the river. At night, as they were preparing to move, two boats were captured, containing a fishing party returning to Wilmington, who were pressed into service as guides.

During the remainder of the second night, Cushing was

occupied in making a thorough examination of the obstructions three miles below the town. At daybreak he moved up one of the creeks, until he found a road. Leaving a few of his men with the boat, he landed, and followed the road until he came upon the main road between Wilmington and Fort Fisher. Presently, by lying in wait, he captured a mounted courier with the mail from the fort, which contained much valuable information. The courier from the town came along two hours later, but, catching sight of a blue-jacket, made off with all speed. Cushing galloped after him on the captured horse, but the second courier was better mounted than the first, and made his escape.

Cushing had now been away from the boat for some hours, and his men had had nothing to eat. He therefore set about in a characteristic way to obtain provisions. After capturing other prisoners, he learned that a store was to be found two miles off; and mounting Howarth on the captured horse with the courier's coat and hat, he sent him to market. Howarth, who was a man of easy manner and a fine assurance, engaged freely in conversation with the people whom he met on the road, and passed without suspicion. Presently he returned with a supply of provisions. After dinner, the party amused themselves by cutting the telegraph wires, and at dark they rejoined the boat.

The third and last night in the river had now begun, and Cushing prepared to return. Embarking with the prisoners, he went to examine the condition of the Raleigh. She was found to have been destroyed, and was now a total wreck. Proceeding down the river, Cushing set his prisoners adrift in boats, without oars or sails, so that they might not report his presence too early. The moon had now risen, and as he reached the mouth of the river, he was discovered by a guard-boat. Just as he was preparing to attack her, three

others came out from the shadow, and at the same instant five more appeared from the other side. The cutter was nearly surrounded, and Cushing, turning in the only direction left open, found a schooner filled with troops ahead of him. It seemed now that the game was up; but Cushing's never-failing pluck stood by him. He made a dash in the direction of the western bar, and the enemy endeavored to intercept him; but as the side of his boat that was toward them was in shadow, they lost sight of him for a time. Taking advantage of a favorable moment, Cushing turned suddenly and headed at full speed for New Inlet. His coolness communicated itself to the men; the strokes of the oars kept perfect time, and the boat, after a vigorous pull, shot ahead into the breakers. Here the enemy did not venture to follow; and the cutter was brought back after her three days' absence, without any casualty whatever.

Only one serious attempt was made by the Confederates to raise the blockade and put an end to the occupation of the Sounds of North Carolina. This took place in 1864, when the ram *Albemarle* made her appearance at Plymouth. This vessel was built at Edward's Ferry, on the Roanoke River. Attention had been called to her formidable character as early as June, 1863, by Lieutenant-Commander Flusser, commanding the naval forces at Plymouth, an officer whose bravery and ability had won recognition both in and out of the service. His vessels could not reach the Ferry, on account of the shallowness of the water and the batteries that lined the bluffs; and urgent representations had been made to the Admiral in command, to the Department, and finally to the Secretary of War, at Flusser's instance. But no action had been taken, and the work of construction went on without interruption.

By April, 1864, the ram was completed, and preparations were made for a combined movement against the Federal

forces at Plymouth. On the 17th and 18th, vigorous attacks were made upon the forts by the Confederates, supported by artillery. At this time, the force under Flusser consisted of the Miami, one of the smaller double-enders, the Southfield, and two tugs used as picket-boats. The Miami and Southfield carried a rifled 100-pounder, and five or six IX-inch guns each; and during the action on shore, by throwing shells at the enemy, they helped to repel the assaults on the forts. On the evening of the second day, the two vessels were lashed together, in expectation of the ram's approach, the Miami, Flusser's vessel, being on the starboard side.

At midnight, the picket-boat announced that the Albemarle was descending the river. She came down slowly, under cover of the trees on the river bank, and as she approached the vessels, she ran out obliquely. Passing the Miami's bow, she made straight for the Southfield. Her ports were closed, she did not fire a shot; but she struck the Southfield fairly on the starboard bow, forcing her ram into the fireroom. As the ram was drawn out, the Southfield filled and sank.

Meantime both vessels had opened fire on the assailant with their heavy guns. The guns had been left loaded with shell since the afternoon firing, although the Albemarle was expected; and as the projectiles struck the ram's iron side, they burst into fragments which rebounded over the Miami's deck. Three or four of the pieces struck Flusser, who was instantly killed. Half a dozen others were wounded; but the ram received no injury. The hawsers that lashed the vessels parted, and the crew of the sinking steamer jumped to the Miami. The latter then retreated, and with the two tugs, dropped down to the mouth of the river. The Albemarle followed for a short distance, and shots were exchanged, but without effect on either side. Next day Plymouth surrendered.

It now became a matter of importance to reinforce the blockading vessels in the Sounds, as the ram might at any moment come out of the river and repossess all the waters of North Carolina. Three of the larger double-enders, the *Sassacus*, *Mattabesett*, and *Wyalusing*, were sent down, and the force was placed under the command of Captain Melancton Smith.<sup>1</sup> The squadron was posted off the mouth of the Roanoke, and careful preparations were made for the expected attack.

On the 5th of May the *Albemarle* came down, accompanied by a steamer carrying troops, and a captured army-transport loaded with provisions and coal, prepared for an extended cruise in the Sounds. The squadron got under way, and met her about ten miles from the mouth of the river. At a little before five in the afternoon she opened the engagement, by firing two shots at the *Mattabesett*, the leading vessel. The latter, followed by the *Sassacus* and *Wyalusing*, passed up alongside the *Albemarle*, delivering their broadsides at a distance of one hundred and fifty yards. Turning, they came back on the opposite side, and the smaller vessels took their place. The ram was thus placed between two fires. The *Sassacus*, which had drawn off a little from the line, now turned, and, gathering headway, struck the enemy fairly with her stem, just abaft the beam. Though the double-enders were not adapted for ramming, it had been decided to try this, as well as every other expedient, in the hope of inflicting some injury. The ram careened a little, but did not sink; and as the *Sassacus* remained alongside, the *Albemarle's* port opened, and a 100-pound Brooke rifle-shot was discharged through one of the boilers of the double-

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<sup>1</sup> Each of these vessels carried the following armament: two 100-pound Parrotts, four IX-inch guns, four 24-pounders, two 12-pound howitzers. The *Sassacus* had two 20-pounders in addition.

ender. The escaping steam filled the vessel, scalding many of the crew, and she drifted off, firing until out of range. The other vessels continued the action until dark, but without disabling the enemy. At night, the ram returned to the river, her armor somewhat battered, but her machinery apparently intact. Though not destroyed, she had been severely hammered; the store-vessel she had brought with her was captured; and her projected conquest of the Sounds came to naught. The next time she ventured down the river, a shell from the Whitehead caused her to turn back; and she seemed to have no inclination for a second conflict.

An effort was now made to destroy the ram by placing torpedoes in the river, but without success. One of these attempts was planned and carried out by enlisted men, and deserves to be noticed, if only as showing the pluck and devotion of the seamen of the navy during the war. The men who took part in the expedition were John W. Loyd, coxswain, Allen Crawford and John Laverty, firemen, and Charles Baldwin and Benjamin Loyd, coalheavers. All were volunteers from the Wyalusing. On the afternoon of the 25th of May, the party ascended the Middle River, a small branch of the Roanoke, in a boat, taking with them two torpedoes. These were carried on a stretcher across the swamps to the main river. Loyd, the coxswain, and Baldwin swam the river with a line, and hauled the torpedoes to the Plymouth side, above the town. They were then connected by a bridle, and floated down the river, guided by Baldwin. It was his intention to place them across the bow of the Albemarle, and Crawford, from the swamps on the opposite side, was to explode them at a signal. All went well until the torpedoes were within a few yards of the ram, when the line fouled a schooner. At the same moment, Baldwin was discovered by a sentry, and shots were fired,

followed by a volley of musketry. As success was no longer possible, the line was cut, and the five men made their escape, reaching the vessel with difficulty, some of them after several days of wandering in the swamps.

The Department now determined to take energetic measures to destroy the *Albemarle*, and selected Cushing, whose latest performances at Wilmington had made him famous, to carry out its design. Two steam-launches or picket-boats were fitted out at New York under the direction of Admiral Gregory, and rigged with spar-torpedoes designed by Chief-Engineer Wood. Both the launches were to be used in the expedition, but one of them was lost in crossing Chesapeake Bay, on the way down from New York. Cushing was not the man to be deterred by an accident, and he proceeded to carry out his purpose with the remaining boat.

Late in October Cushing appeared with his launch in *Albemarle Sound*. The senior officer at this time was Commander Macomb, whose vessel, the *Shamrock*, was lying with the rest of the division in the Sound, some miles from the *Roanoke*. One or two of the small steamers were stationed as a picket at the mouth of the river, and midway between them and the squadron lay one of the double-enders, as an outpost. After a day or two spent in preparations, during which several additional officers and men joined the launch, she was taken up the Sound by the *Otsego*. Remaining alongside until everything was ready, she started up the river, on the night of the 26th of October; but after proceeding a short distance she grounded, and the time lost in getting her off made it too late to carry out the purpose of the expedition. So the party returned to the *Otsego*.

The *Albemarle* at this time was lying at the wharf at Plymouth, on the right bank of the river, eight miles from its mouth. The stream averaged two hundred yards in width,

and was lined on both sides by Confederate pickets. A mile below the town was the wreck of the Southfield, surrounded by schooners. It was known that the enemy kept a careful watch at this point, and that a gun was in position to command the bend of the river.

The launch started for the second time at midnight on the 27th. The party consisted of Cushing; three Acting-Master's Mates, Howarth, Gay, and Woodman; Paymaster Swan; two engineer officers, Steever and Stotesbury; and eight men. The Shamrock's second cutter, with two officers and eleven men, was taken in tow, ready to cast off and to board the Southfield if the party was discovered in passing. The torpedo was placed at the end of a spar, at the starboard bow of the launch. The bow was decked over and carried a 12-pound howitzer. The engines were covered with tarpaulins, to shut off the light and sound, and at low speed the noise of the machinery could scarcely be heard.

The night was dark and stormy, with now and then a heavy fall of rain. Most of the officers stood or sat in the forward part of the launch. Cushing, Howarth, and Woodman stood abaft the deck. Cushing was on the right, holding the torpedo lines; Howarth, his companion in the enterprises at Wilmington, was next him; and Woodman, who knew the river well, was on the left by the wheel. On the deck by the howitzer stood Gay; and Swan was on the right behind Cushing. The engineers and the firemen were at their post by the engine, and the rest were stationed on the bow, near the wheel, and in the stern. The last were to clear the tiller ropes, in case they should foul.

Running cautiously under the trees on the right bank, the launch proceeded on her way up the enemy's river. It was Cushing's intention, if he could get ashore unobserved, to land below the ram, board her from the wharf, and bring

her down the river. To carry out this plan, it was necessary that the attack should be a surprise ; but, failing in this, he was prepared to attack with the torpedo. In either case, he meant to give the enemy as little warning as he could. After the first mile or two, perfect silence was maintained, and the little craft sped noiselessly on its course. Arriving at the Southfield, it passed her within twenty yards, but the guards either were asleep or failed to notice the two boats as they moved along in the darkness. Rounding the bend of the river, the launch came to an open reach upon which lay the town of Plymouth. Here a fire had been kindled on the bank, which reflected a faint light over the water from the houses.

Creeping along silently and stealthily, the launch approached the landing below the wharf. Just then a dog barked, and a sentry, aroused, discovered the boat and hailed her. Receiving no answer, he hailed again and fired. Up to this moment not a word had been uttered. But in an instant the situation was changed. The time for surprises was past ; and Cushing, giving up without a second thought his cherished project, at once threw off all concealment, and in a loud voice called out, "Ahead fast!" In the same breath he ordered the cutter to cast loose, capture the Southfield's pickets, and go down the river. Pushing on two hundred yards further, he saw for the first time the dim outlines of the Albemarle, on the port bow, and close aboard. The light of the fire showed a line of logs in the water, within which, at a distance of thirty feet, lay the vessel. The launch was too near the logs to rise over them at the sharp angle her course was then making, and Cushing saw that he must sheer off and turn before he could strike them fairly and with sufficient headway.

The alarm on board the Albemarle had now become gen-

eral; rattles were sprung, the bell was rung violently; and a shower of rifle-bullets was poured in upon the launch. Swan received a slight wound, and Cushing had three bullets in his clothing, but no one was disabled. Passing close to the enemy, the launch took a wide sweep out to the middle of the river; then turning, it headed at full speed for the ram. As he approached, Cushing, with the rollicking bravado and audacity that marked all his doings, shouted at the top of his voice, "Leave the ram! We are going to blow you up!" with more exclamations of the same kind, in which the others joined. To Cushing, who went into action with the zest of a schoolboy at football, and the nerve and well-balanced judgment of a veteran, the whole affair was half sport, even while the bullets were flying around him, and while he could hear the snapping of the primers, as the guns of the ram were brought to bear. Luckily they missed fire. As he came near, Cushing ordered the howitzer to be trained and fired; and he directed every movement himself, which was promptly carried out by those in the bow. He says of this incident in his report: "The enemy's fire was very severe, but a dose of canister, at short range, served to moderate their zeal and disturb their aim."

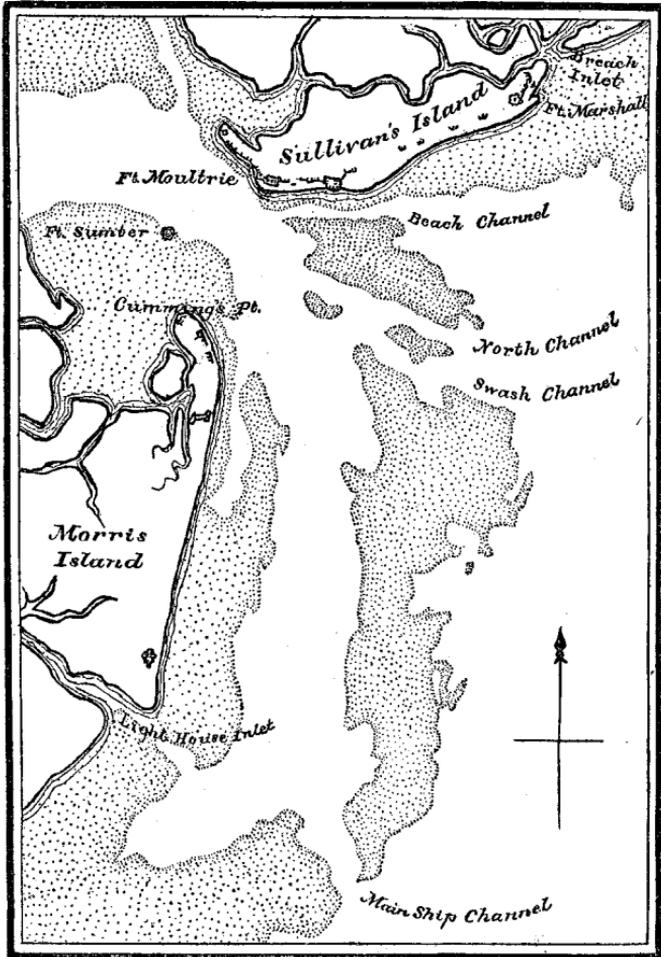
In a moment the launch struck the boom of logs, abreast of the ram's quarter port, and pressed over them. As it approached the side of the ram, the torpedo-spar was lowered; and going ahead slowly until the torpedo was well under the Albemarle's bottom, Cushing detached it with a vigorous pull. Waiting until he could feel the torpedo rising slowly and touching the vessel, he pulled the trigger-line and exploded it. At the same second, as it seemed to those in the boat, the Albemarle's gun was fired, while the launch was within a dozen feet of the muzzle. To Cushing it seemed that the shot went crashing through his boat, though in fact

she was not touched. A column of water, thrown up by the explosion of the torpedo, fell in the launch, and the latter, being entangled in the logs, could not be extricated.

When he saw that he could not bring the boat off, Cushing, after refusing to surrender, ordered the crew to save themselves, and taking off his coat and shoes, jumped into the river. Others followed his example; but all returned except three, Woodman, and two of the crew, Higgins and Houghton. Houghton made his escape, but the other two were drowned. Cushing swam to the middle of the stream. Half a mile below he met Woodman in the water, completely exhausted. Cushing helped him to go on for a little distance, but he was by this time too weak to get his companion ashore. Reaching the bank with difficulty, he waited till daylight, when he crawled out of the water and stole into the swamp, not far from the fort. On his way he fell in with a negro, whom he sent to gain information as to the result of the night's work. As soon as he learned that the *Albemarle* was sunk, he moved on until he came to a creek, where he captured a skiff, and in this he made his way the next night to the picket-boat at the mouth of the river.

The rest of the party, unable either to resist or to escape, surrendered, and were taken ashore by a boat from the *Albemarle*. The ram heeled over and sank at her moorings and so remained until Plymouth was finally recaptured.

The South Atlantic Blockading Squadron had but two commanders, Dupont and Dahlgren. The transfer was made July 6, 1863. Dupont's command opened with the victory of Port Royal, which gave the squadron the best and most commodious harbor on the Atlantic coast. After the first success, the activity of Admiral Dupont, seconded by the ability and energy of his captains—a body of officers remark-



Entrances to Charleston Harbor.

able for their high professional qualities—secured the control of the vast network of lagoons and inlets extending on the one hand to Charleston, and on the other to Fernandina. The blockade was made thoroughly efficient in the sounds; and the capture of Fort Pulaski in the following summer, in which a detachment from the fleet assisted, made the Savannah River nearly inaccessible to the blockade-runners. Port Royal then became the centre of occupation, and the headquarters of the fleet.

The principal centre of blockade in the South Atlantic was Charleston. An attempt was made early in the war to close the entrance by placing obstructions in the channel. A number of vessels, most of them old whalers, were bought for the purpose by the Navy Department at a cost of \$160,000. They were loaded with stone and sunk in rows on the bar, under the direction of Captain Davis. The plan proved a failure, not through any want of skill in carrying it out, but from the operation of natural causes. The vessels soon buried themselves in the sand, or were gradually moved out of position by the action of the water, and blockade-runners passed in as freely as if no obstructions existed. The experiment was tried at other points with the same result, and the attempt was finally given up.

The bar at Charleston extends several miles out to sea, and the main ship channel, running nearly north and south, follows the trend of Morris Island at a distance of a mile from the shore. During the first half of the war the batteries on Morris Island kept the fleet outside the bar, and the blockade was maintained at a great disadvantage. Moreover, several inlets to the north and south afforded access to Charleston for vessels of light draft. These were only closed after Dupont had taken command. In the summer and fall of 1863 the army, supported by the ironclads, grad-

ually drove the Confederates out of their works on the Island, and the monitors took their station inside, somewhat to the southward of Cumming's Point. Blockade-runners were then driven to the use of the Beach channel, at the northern side of the harbor. This channel skirted the shore of Sullivan's Island, and opened into the harbor through a narrow passage close to Fort Moultrie. Its outer end lay abreast of Breach Inlet, near which was Fort Marshall; and from this point to Fort Beauregard, and thence to Fort Moultrie, heavy batteries lined the beach. It became usual to send a vessel at night to this entrance, which, weighing early, got away from the Breach Inlet batteries before day-break. Occasionally it happened that blockade-runners, which had come in during the night, would be seen in the morning hard and fast aground at the inner entrance. No attempt could be made to seize them, lying as they did directly under the guns of Moultrie; but they could be destroyed by the fire of the monitors, and a collection of wrecks was gradually accumulated at this point.

Toward the close of the war the blockade of Charleston, like that of Wilmington, increased in stringency. Dahlgren describes it as being perfectly close, until a few very fast steamers of trifling draft were built in England expressly for the purpose of evading it, and these did not pass with impunity. So keen did the watch afterward become that a vessel on the way out, whose presence was only known by seeing her two masts cut off the light on Sumter, was captured by the observer's signalling the cruisers outside. But even then the port could not be absolutely closed. The "very fast steamers of trifling draft" were so difficult to catch that up to the last moment they were occasionally going in and out; and three or four of them were at the wharves of Charleston when the city was taken.

The Savannah River was easily blockaded after the capture of Fort Pulaski. Its channel, narrow and difficult at the best, was well-nigh impassable when stripped of buoys and lights; and the fort, lying opposite the narrowest point, prevented access in the daytime. The principal side entrance to the city of Savannah, through Wassaw Sound, was effectually closed when the Sounds were occupied after the battle of Port Royal.

The Confederates were not at any time sufficiently strong to raise the blockade on the South Atlantic coast. The raids that were made with this object—sudden dashes into the midst of the blockading fleet—though well organized and conducted, failed to accomplish any more important result than disabling one or two vessels, and increasing the watchfulness of the blockaders.

One of the boldest of these attempts was made in the winter of 1863, off Charleston. On the morning of January 31, before daylight, two ironclad rams, the *Chicora* and the *Palmetto State*, came out of the harbor, crossed the bar, and, under cover of a thick haze, approached the vessels stationed outside. It happened that at this time two of the largest vessels of the blockading fleet, the *Powhatan* and *Canandaigua*, had been sent to Port Royal for coal and repairs. Of those that remained, numbering ten or more steamers, the *Housatonic* was the only war-vessel of considerable size. The others were chiefly purchased vessels and gunboats. It was one of the many disadvantages of the exposed station outside the bar that it necessitated the distribution of the ships over a wide area, and at this time they were spread out in a line five or six miles in length.

The *Mercedita* was the first vessel attacked. It could not be said that she was off her guard, for, only an hour before, she had slipped her cable and overhauled a troop-ship, which

was running for the channel by mistake. She had returned to her anchorage, when one of the rams suddenly appeared out of the mist, close aboard. The ram lay so low in the water, just under the starboard quarter, that the *Mercedita's* guns could not be trained upon her; and before the steamer could move away, a rifle-shell from the ram, passing through her condenser and steam-drum, and exploding on the port side, for a time disabled her. *Stellwagen*, the commander of the *Mercedita*, in response to a demand from the ram, surrendered, and sent *Abbot*, his first lieutenant, on board, who gave his parole for the officers and crew.

The ram now abandoned the *Mercedita*, and joined her consort, which had already engaged *Commander Leroy* in the *Keystone State*. *Leroy* had discovered his assailant in time to get under way and exchange shots. The enemy, uninjured by his fire, succeeded in exploding a shell in his fore-hold, and *Leroy* kept off until the flames were extinguished. Returning, he attempted, under a full head of steam, to run down his antagonist; but the latter had now been joined by her companion, and the *Keystone State* was received with a fire that effectually checked her. Two shells burst on her quarter-deck; others struck the sides, near or below the water-line; and finally one passed through the port steam-drum and lodged in the starboard. Her engines were now useless, her motive power was gone, the water began to pour in through the shot-holes, and the fore-hold was again on fire. Thereupon she lowered her colors; but as the enemy continued his fire, and did not take possession, they were again hoisted and the engagement renewed.

By this time, nearly the whole squadron was under way; and, at the critical moment, three of the small steamers came up, and the rams retreated after a protracted but desultory conflict. As they went off, shots were exchanged with

the squadron, but little damage was done on either side, and the rams gained a safe refuge under the guns of Fort Sumter. The attack had been judiciously planned and boldly executed, as far as it went; though it might have been more successful if it had been maintained persistently after the first onset. Among the vessels of the blockading squadron there was a want of systematic co-operation. The first shot was fired at five o'clock; and the rams had not retreated out of range until half-past seven. During this period of two hours and a half, the brunt of the battle was borne by the *Mercedita* and the *Keystone State*. The other vessels supposed that a number of blockade-runners had come in together, and no arrangement seems to have been made for prompt communication and support. The *Memphis* came in for a share of the attack, but after passing one of the rams and discovering its strength in an exchange of shots, she steamed out of range to the eastward. The *Augusta* was also engaged, but as she did not get under way until half-past six, her part in the action was not important. In fact, neither of these vessels was any more fitted than a ship of pasteboard to cope with the ironclads; and their light batteries made no impression on the enemy. The *Quaker City* was more actively engaged, but with little more effect than to divert the attention of the rams, and prevent the *Keystone State* from being blown out of the water. The *Housatonic*, lying at some distance from the scene of conflict, had got under way shortly after the *Augusta*, and during the last hour of the engagement, she did much firing, but little execution, further than to knock away the pilot-house and flag-staff of one of the retreating assailants.

After the engagement was over, a question arose as to what was the status of the *Mercedita*. When Abbot went on board the ram, he gave his parole, as already men-

tioned, in the name of the captain, for the officers and crew. The agreement was verbal, and Abbot's report stated that he had given his word that the officers and crew would not "take up arms against the Confederate States unless regularly exchanged." It does not appear that Abbot had authority to make this engagement, but no steps were taken by the captain to repudiate it. Possibly there was no opportunity to take any steps. In his report, Stellwagen simply says: "He proceeded aboard, and according to their demand, gave his parole on behalf of himself and all the officers and crew." In regard to this proceeding, it may be remarked that it is a well recognized principle that prisoners cannot be forced to give their parole; and it is manifestly improper to give a parole voluntarily, during the progress of an engagement. It enables the assailant to neutralize portions of the force in detail, without being diverted from his operations by the necessity of guarding prisoners; and it precludes recapture, or rather, it takes away any advantage that may be derived from recapture.

At six o'clock, according to Stellwagen's account, which was one hour after the engagement began, and an hour and a half before it was over, the injuries to the *Mercedita* were partially repaired, and she "got things in order to start, a little steam on; hove [up] anchor." It is not clear whether she then went off, but it is at least certain that she changed her position. After the battle she proceeded without assistance to Port Royal. This removal of the *Mercedita* was afterward the foundation of a charge made by the Confederates that the officers of the vessel had violated their parole, by taking the *Mercedita* out of their hands. The proceeding was, in fact, a questionable one, as it is merely quibbling to draw a distinction between "taking up arms," and navigating a ship-of-war out of reach of an enemy. It can only be

excused on the supposition that the enemy were unable to take possession owing to the presence of a superior force; and it shows forcibly the predicament in which an officer may place himself by giving a parole which virtually places his ship *hors de combat* during the progress of an action.

In consequence of the attack of the rams, the authorities of Charleston seized the opportunity to declare that the blockade was raised. A proclamation was published the same afternoon, signed by Beauregard and Ingraham, the Commanding General and Senior Naval Officer, declaring that the naval forces attacked the blockading squadron, and "sunk, dispersed, or drove off or out of sight, the entire blockading fleet." The proclamation was accompanied in the newspapers by the statement that two vessels were sunk, four burnt, and the rest driven away; and the assertion was said to be sustained by the testimony of several of the foreign consuls, who had gone out in the afternoon in a tug, and had seen nothing of the blockaders. It was also asserted that the consuls had held a meeting in the evening, and had come unanimously to the opinion that the blockade was legally raised.

The asseverations of the Charleston newspapers were extensively quoted abroad, and grossly exaggerated as they were, raised a serious doubt as to the continued efficiency of the blockade. It is an established rule that the absence of a blockading fleet, caused by stress of weather, if the blockade is immediately resumed, constitutes only a temporary interruption; but the dispersion of a squadron by a hostile attack puts a stop to the blockade *in toto*, and a renewal of the operation requires a new proclamation, or rather, requires knowledge of the re-establishment of the blockade as a ground for condemnation. If the assertion that the blockade was raised had been true, every blockade-runner in

Nassau would have been able to make directly for Charleston, and if captured without having received warning would have escaped condemnation on the ground of want of knowledge. As a matter of fact, the report so industriously spread was essentially false, though it had enough color of truth to give it a ready acceptance, in the absence of proof to the contrary, especially when backed by official testimony. Out of ten vessels on the station, two had been disabled by the attack, and had proceeded to Port Royal. Two other vessels were sent the same morning to Port Royal, the Augusta, with despatches for the Admiral, and the Memphis to tow the Keystone State. Both were sent back immediately by Dupont. In the afternoon, firing was heard in Stono Inlet, and the Flag was sent thither. Of the other five vessels, the Stettin, Ottawa, and Unadilla were not engaged at all, and neither they, nor the Housatonic and Quaker City left the usual line of blockade during the day. If the consuls did not see these five vessels, whose logs show that they were in plain sight all day, and several times in communication, it was because they did not look at them. The report, however, had served its purpose, and it was commonly believed that the blockade of Charleston was raised, although a written declaration of five captains of the squadron was published, containing a complete refutation.

The attack had a good effect in showing the necessity of strengthening the force before Charleston, which had hitherto only been adequate to cope with blockade-runners. The Powhatan was sent to Charleston the same evening, and the New Ironsides and Canandaigua joined a day or two later. The blockade was thereafter continued with redoubled vigilance, and with a new sense of the necessity of perfect co-operation.

The disposition of the vessels of the South Atlantic Squadron, as given by Admiral Dupont on February 15, 1863, shows what a radical change had taken place under his command in the character and efficiency of the blockade. The arrangement of the squadron was as follows :

At Georgetown, the double-enders Sebago and Conemaugh.

Off Bull's Bay, the steamer Lodona.

Off Charleston, the New Ironsides; the side-wheel steamer Powhatan; sloops-of-war Canandaigua and Housatonic; steamers Flag, Quaker City, James Adger, Augusta, Huron, and Memphis; schooners G. W. Blunt and America.

In Stono Inlet, the steamers Pawnee, Unadilla, and Commodore McDonough.

In North Edisto, the steamer South Carolina.

In St. Helena, the bark Kingfisher.

In Wassaw, the monitor Passaic, and steamer Marblehead.

In Ossabaw, the monitor Montauk, gunboats Seneca and Wissahickon, and steamer Dawn.

Guarding St. Catherine's, Sapelo, Doboy, and St. Simon's Sounds, the steamers Paul Jones, Potomska, and Madgie; barks Braziliera and Fernandina; and mortar-schooner Norfolk Packet.

In St. Andrew's, the bark Midnight.

At Fernandina, the steamer Mohawk.

In St. John's River, the steamers Nonsuch and Uncas.

At Port Royal, the headquarters of the station, were the frigate Wabash, the flagship, the storeship Vermont, five tugs, and two despatch-vessels; and temporarily in port, undergoing repairs or taking in provisions, the monitors Weehawken and Patapsco, and the steamers Keystone State, Stettin, Wamsutta, and Ottawa. The experience of eighteen months had wrought a change indeed in the methods of the coast blockade, since there were on a single station more

vessels than the navy had had in commission at the outbreak of the war.

The next attempt of the Confederates to raise the blockade on the South Atlantic station resulted disastrously to its projectors. This was the brief cruise of the *Atlanta*, formerly the *Fingal*, in Wassaw Sound, in June, 1863.

The *Fingal* was an iron steamer of English origin, which had run the blockade of Savannah in November, 1861. She had been taken by the Confederate Government, re-named the *Atlanta*, and altered and strengthened for service as a man-of-war. In making the alterations, she had been cut down so as to leave the deck about two feet above the water when loaded. From this deck rose a casemate, with a flat roof and inclined sides. Within the casemate were four Brooke rifles, two VI $\frac{4}{16}$ -inch in the midship ports, and two VII-inch on pivots at the bow and stern, so contrived that they could be fired either laterally or fore-and-aft. The armor protecting this powerful battery was four inches thick, made of English railroad iron, rolled into two-inch plates. The deck was of enormous strength, and its edges projected six feet from the side of the vessel, the projection being filled in and protected with a heavy covering of wood and iron. The *Atlanta's* bow ended in a ram, over which projected a torpedo spar. She was in every way one of the most powerful vessels which the Confederates had got afloat; and great things were expected of her.

Intimations had reached Admiral Dupont that the *Atlanta* and other ironclads at Savannah were on the point of leaving Wilmington River and entering Wassaw Sound for the purpose of raising the blockade at that place, and in the inlets to the southward. It was to be another raid on the blockaders, like that of the 31st of January; but the vessel to be employed was much more powerful. Dupont, however, was

careful to be well informed, and the experience of the previous winter had not been lost. The double-ender *Cimmerone* was at this time maintaining the blockade alone, and two monitors were despatched to *Wassaw*, the *Weehawken*, under Captain John Rodgers, and the *Nahant*, under Commander Downes. The *Weehawken* had already won an enviable fame, and was known throughout the squadron as a vessel that was always ready for any service and always handled with masterly skill.

Early on the morning of the 17th of June, the ironclad was discovered coming down the river. She was accompanied by two steamers, filled with spectators who had come out in the confident expectation of witnessing the speedy destruction of the Federal fleet. It was to be a spectacle, a party of pleasure, like that which tempted the people of Boston, just fifty years before, to sail down the harbor, on the day when Lawrence went out to encounter the *Shannon*; and like that memorable excursion, it was doomed to end in disappointment.

As soon as the *Atlanta* came in sight, Rodgers beat to quarters and cleared the ship for action. Ten minutes later he slipped his cable, and steamed slowly around the point at the entrance of the river. The *Nahant*, having no pilot, followed in his wake. Just before five o'clock, the *Atlanta*, then lying across the channel and awaiting the attack, fired the first shot, which passed astern of the *Weehawken*. For twenty minutes more, the monitors advanced steadily until within three hundred yards of the enemy. Then the *Weehawken* opened.

With the deliberateness which characterized him in the most trying moments, Rodgers delivered the fire of his two heavy guns, the XI-inch and the XV-inch. He fired five shots, of which four hit the *Atlanta*. The first, a XV-inch

cored shot, struck the inclined side of the vessel, in the line of the ports; and though fired at an angle of fifty degrees with her keel, penetrated the armor, and, ripping out the wooden backing, the two inner layers of which were of brittle Georgia pine, covered the deck with splinters. From the effects of this shot, forty or more men were prostrated, several of whom received ugly wounds from the fragments of wood and iron. The second shot, from the XI-inch gun, struck the edge of the overhang, and started the plating. The third carried off the roof of the pilot-house, wounded the two pilots, and stunned the men at the wheel. The fourth shattered a port-shutter, driving the fragments in through the port.

Upon this the Atlanta hauled down her colors, and hoisted a white flag. It was just fifteen minutes after the Weehawken had commenced firing. The Atlanta was not disabled, nor had there been any great number of serious casualties among the crew; but they had had enough. The possibilities of a XV-inch gun, fired at a range of two hundred yards, were matters that they had no wish to investigate further. As Rodgers drily remarked in commenting upon the action, the first shot took away their disposition to fight, and the third their ability to get away.

The battle was so short and decisive that the Nahant had no opportunity to take part in it. When the Weehawken ranged up to her prize, the latter was found to be aground; but she was backed off a few hours later with little difficulty, and steamed without assistance to Port Royal.

The engagement of the Weehawken and the Atlanta was one of the extraordinary events of the war, and illustrates, perhaps better than any other, the revolution which fifty years of scientific progress had wrought in naval warfare. The action of the Chesapeake and Shannon, which took

place in June, 1813, off Boston, had enough points of resemblance to make the two engagements a fair subject of comparison. Both were exceptional victories, for so complete a victory in fifteen minutes, the time covered in each of the two fights, will probably always be exceptional. Nor does the resemblance stop here. In both actions the victorious captain is one of the marked men of his service—bold but prudent, attentive to details, minutely careful in preparation, skilful in action. Each is a splendid type of his kind in the age to which he belongs. As Broke was the model captain of his day, so Rodgers is of his. The Shannon was always ready for any kind of service, her discipline exact, her crew willing, her gunnery precise. The Weehawken shows her surpassing excellence in the same qualities; for no man knew better than Rodgers how to get good work and ready service from his men. But the captain of 1813 is an able executive, a skilful seaman, a capable gunnery officer; while the captain of 1863 is all this, and a man of science in addition. On the losing side, the parallel is equally striking. There is in both engagements the same negligence of preparation, shown in the case of the Atlanta by the extreme disorder of the vessel, and in that of the Chesapeake by the disorganization of the crew. There is the same ineffective gun-practice, the same speedy demoralization. Both captains are brave men; but both go into action with the same easy confidence, in each case fully shared, perhaps largely created, by the people around them, who go off in pleasure-boats to witness the fight, as if it were to be merely an exhibition of fireworks.

But here the parallel ceases. There is little in common between the stately frigates—the Chesapeake, bearing down before the wind under all sail, or the Shannon, with her lofty spars, and her maintopsail against the mast, and the two rafts whose armored citadels protect everything but the

decks and the funnel. As little do the batteries of carro-nades and long eighteens resemble the Brooke rifles of the Atlanta or the huge Dahlgren smooth-bores of the monitor. The mode of fighting corresponds to the character of the ships and the weapons. The Chesapeake ranges up along-side her antagonist, and the two vessels deliver their broad-sides almost in contact. An accident brings them foul: and straightway the crew of the Shannon, their captain at the head, rush on board the enemy with pike, cutlass, and pistol. After a bloody struggle, a hand-to-hand pell-mell fight, the crew of the Chesapeake is overpowered and surrenders. Fifty years later, the vessels do not approach nearer than two hundred yards, and four shots, deliberately aimed, settle the whole affair. There is little bloodshed; no one is touched on board the Weehawken, and the injured among the prisoners comprise about a tenth part of the defeated crew.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE GULF SQUADRONS.

THE command of the Gulf Blockading Squadron was assigned to Flag-Officer William Mervine, who had served in California during the Mexican war, and who had now been fifty-two years in the service. He arrived in the Gulf on June 8, 1861, whither he was shortly followed by his flagship, the Colorado. Before his arrival the blockade had been set on foot by the vessels already on the station. Some of these had pushed westward late in May, and on the 26th of that month, the Powhatan, under Porter, arrived off Mobile, while the Brooklyn, taking her station on the same day off Pass-à-Loutre, announced the blockade of New Orleans. The Powhatan remained off Mobile until the 29th, when she was relieved by the Niagara, which came in from Havana. Porter then proceeded off the Southwest Pass of the Mississippi, which he blockaded on the 31st. On the 13th of June the Massachusetts arrived off the Passes, where she remained on blockade duty. Galveston was invested by the South Carolina, on the 2d of July. When Mervine arrived at his post on the 8th of June, in the frigate Mississippi, he found a beginning already made, and by July he had a force of twenty-one vessels.

Mervine's first act after his arrival on the station was to publish a proclamation declaring, in the usual form, that "an effective blockade of the port of Key West, Florida, has

been established and will be rigidly enforced and maintained against any and all vessels (public armed vessels of foreign powers alone excepted) which shall attempt to enter or depart from the said port of Key West, Florida." As Key West was wholly in the possession of the United States authorities, and as it is a barren island, dependent on supplies by sea for the barest necessities of life, the proclamation caused some consternation among the inhabitants. Next day, however, the order was rescinded, and it was announced that trading with the loyal States and with Cuba would be permitted under certain restrictions.

A cruise made by H. M. S. Jason, Captain Von Donop, shortly after Mervine's arrival, showed the following disposition of the forces in the Gulf: the Cuyler was off Tampa Bay; the Montgomery in Appalachee Bay; the Mississippi, Niagara, and Water Witch off Pensacola; the Huntsville and the sailing-sloop St. Louis off Mobile; and the Brooklyn, Powhatan and two gunboats were off the Mississippi Passes. The Jason did not go to Galveston. This report, coupled with other evidence, goes to show that during the first few months, the main entrances to the principal ports in the Gulf, as in the Atlantic, were efficiently blockaded; but there was no blockade of the intermediate stretches of coast, and the side entrances to the ports were also without a guard.

The general course of operations in the Gulf was similar to that in the Atlantic; and the same plan of converting the blockade at various points into an occupation was gradually but systematically carried out. A lodgment was effected at New Orleans before the first year was over, and the necessity of a blockade was largely obviated at the most important point on the coast. From this base, further operations checked the desultory commerce carried on by small vessels in the Louisiana bayous. The occupation of Ship Island

covered the waters of Mississippi Sound, where a small coasting trade with Mobile was, nevertheless, persistently carried on. At Pensacola, Fort Pickens commanded the entrance from the beginning; and in 1862 the city was evacuated, and became the depot of the West Gulf Squadron. Galveston was occupied by the United States forces from October, 1862, until the disaster on the first day of 1863. During the following year, possession was taken of various points in Texas, but the land forces were subsequently withdrawn and the blockade re-established. Finally, in August, 1864, Mobile was closed by the surrender of the forts to Admiral Farragut and General Granger.

In the latter part of September, 1861, Mervine was relieved by Flag-Officer William W. McKean. It was decided that a division of the squadrons in the Gulf was necessary, such as had been made in the Atlantic, and the Department only waited until its plan of active operations in that quarter could be matured and a sufficient force sent to the station. Farragut had been selected to command the expedition against New Orleans, and on the 21st of February he assumed command of the West Gulf Squadron, with a cruising-ground extending from Pensacola to the Rio Grande. Farragut remained in command until late in 1864, when Commodore Thatcher was appointed to succeed him.

The Eastern Gulf Squadron extended from Cape Canaveral on the eastern coast of Florida, to Pensacola. Its headquarters were at Key West. McKean remained in command until June 4, 1862, when he was relieved by Captain Lardner. Lardner was soon followed by Commodore Theodoros Bailey, who retained the command two years, and whose health finally broke down, as did that of many of his officers, upon this undesirable station. After a short interval, Commodore Cornelius K. Stribling assumed the command

on the 12th of October, and retained it until the close of the war.

The blockade of Florida required a different management from that of other parts of the coast. There were no large commercial centres which might influence the destination of steamers with valuable cargoes; nor were there any points whose position, by giving ready access to the interior, made it indispensable that they should be strongly intrenched. Hence the main force of the blockade could not be concentrated at a few points. On the other hand, there were innumerable bays and inlets, difficult and dangerous of access, where small vessels might enter unobserved, and remain concealed for an indefinite time. It was well-nigh impossible, no matter how large or vigilant the force in these waters, to prevent absolutely the trade carried on by these vessels. The best that could be done was to keep up a constant watch, and to scour the coast at intervals, sending in small parties in boats to seize a vessel whenever its presence was known. Numberless little affairs thus took place on the station—engagements with small batteries, boarding parties, cutting-out expeditions, raids upon salt-works, sudden dashes into remote and unfrequented inlets, on dark nights, through tortuous channels, usually followed by the capture of cotton-laden schooners, or stray boats, or bales of cotton, with the loss of a man or two here and there.

While the *Tahoma* was lying off Cedar Keys, on February 23, 1862, a boat expedition was sent in, under Lieutenant Crosman, to cut out a schooner lying in the boat-channel between Cedar Keys and the mainland, and to capture a ferry-boat which had been used for communicating between the land and the Keys. Crosman secured the ferry-boat, but the schooner lay on the other side of the railroad trestle crossing the channel; and, night coming on, he was obliged

to defer operations. Going into the channel next morning, he found that the schooner had disappeared; and, as he was coming out of the narrow passage, a heavy fire of small arms was opened from a stockade on the shore. His men were at the oars, pulling against a strong flood tide and a fresh wind; and the two officers of the boats were the only people who could return the fire. The leading boat had barely got out of range, when the prize capsized. Nothing daunted, Crosman pulled back under the fire of the troops, which covered the prize, and endeavored to right her; but after some time spent in unavailing efforts, he scuttled and sank her, returning with the loss of only one man to his ship.

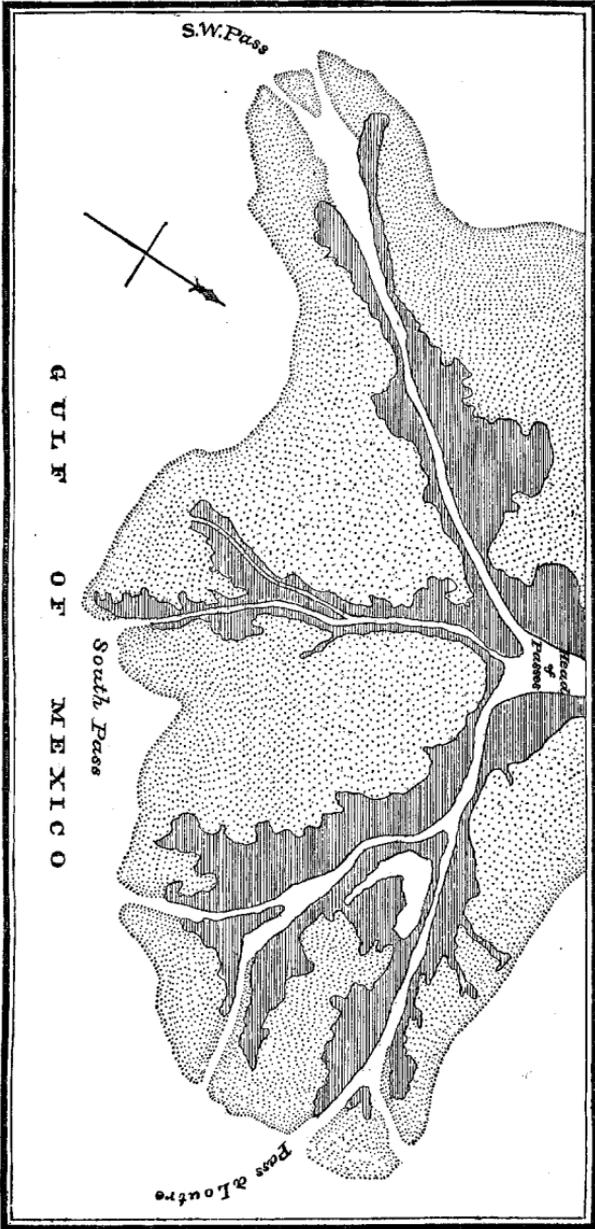
The ferry-boat Somerset, under Lieutenant-Commander Earl English, attacked the salt-works near Dépôt Key on October 4, 1862. After a few shells had been fired, a white flag was hoisted on the works, and a party was sent on shore to destroy them. No sooner had the party landed, than they were fired upon from the building displaying the flag of truce, and half of them were disabled. Immediately after the affair, the gunboat Tahoma arrived, under Commander John C. Howell. A strong force was landed, led by Crosman with his usual energy and judgment, and fifty or sixty salt-boilers were destroyed.

These are only a few out of numberless small affairs that took place on the coast. They made little noise, but the service was one that involved hardship and danger, and it exacted ceaseless activity and untiring effort. It was more like the old conflicts of the excisemen and smugglers on the Scottish coast than the regular operations of warfare; though the contrabandistas of Florida had no occasion to sell their lives as dearly as the Hatteracks of eighty years ago.

In the West Gulf, the most important points were Mobile

and New Orleans. The latter was by far the largest and wealthiest city at the South; in fact, it ranked sixth in point of population among the cities of the Union. Its tonnage movement was enormous, its export trade being one of the most extensive in the world. There were two principal entrances to the Mississippi, Pass-à-Loutre and Southwest Pass, though there were several others of less importance. At these two entrances the deposits of mud made by the river were continually altering the channels; and the position of the bar and the depth of water were shifting and uncertain. The channel was deeper now in one, now in the other, and the commerce of New Orleans varied its course accordingly. The smaller passes admitted only vessels of the lightest draft.

The main passes were about fifteen miles in length and there were from fourteen to seventeen feet of water on the bars at their mouth. The three smaller passes had from six to ten feet. At the point of divergence, known as the Head of the Passes, the stream of the Mississippi is broad and deep, and though the current is strong, there is a safe and roomy anchorage. The two forts that formed the main defences of New Orleans lay twenty miles above this point, and there was nothing to obstruct the movements of the blockading fleet between the forts and the bar. It would seem that the first step in the blockade of New Orleans would naturally be to station a force at the Head of the Passes, where all the outlets could be closed at once. It was clearly the most economical and most effectual way to blockade the river; but the position was exposed to sudden attacks by the enemy, and in order to be maintained successfully, it required a force that should combine strength for resisting attack with handiness of movement. A sloop-of-war with one or two small, active, well-armed despatch-vessels or gun-



Passes of the Mississippi.

boats, to act as pickets, could close the passage effectually, and by the exercise of constant vigilance could reduce the risk of lying in the enemy's waters to a minimum.

Early in October, 1861, the squadron was moved up from the bar, and took its post at the Head of the Passes. Possession was taken of the telegraph station, and work was begun on a fortification. The force consisted of the Richmond, commanded by Captain John Pope, the senior officer present; the Vincennes, Commander Robert Handy; the Preble, Commander French; and the side-wheel steamer Water Witch, Lieutenant Francis Winslow. The Vincennes and the Preble were sailing sloops-of-war. The Richmond was one of the smaller of the first-class screw-sloops built shortly before the war, and an admirable vessel, carrying a powerful battery of twenty-two IX-inch guns, one 80-pounder, and one rifled 30-pounder. The Vincennes carried four VIII-inch shell guns, and fourteen 32-pounders. The Water Witch, a small vessel, well adapted for river service, had one 24-pound howitzer, two 12-pounders, and one Dahlgren 20-pounder. It was known that considerable preparations were making at New Orleans to fit out a naval force under the direction of Commodore Hollins, and in particular that a formidable ram, the Manassas, was in process of construction; but no extraordinary precautions seem to have been taken by the blockading squadron to prevent a surprise.

On the 11th of October, the Water Witch had towed a coaling schooner alongside the Richmond, and had afterward anchored on her starboard quarter, a little inshore. The Preble lay in advance of the Richmond, about one hundred and fifty yards off, on her starboard bow. The Vincennes was lower down the river, on the opposite side.

A little before four o'clock, on the morning of the 12th, while the watch on deck was getting coal on board the Rich-

mond from the schooner alongside, a ram was discovered close aboard. This was the *Manassas*, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Warley. The *Preble* saw her at the same moment, as well as the prize-schooner *Frolic*, and giving the alarm at once, beat to quarters. A moment later, the ram struck the *Richmond* abreast of the port fore-channels, making a small hole in her side, and tearing the schooner from her fasts. The injury was speedily repaired; and the *Richmond*, slipping her cable and ranging ahead, avoided a second blow on her quarter. The ram, having been herself seriously injured by the shock, then gave up the attempt, and standing up the river, received broadsides from the *Richmond* and from the *Preble* as she passed them. Steaming ahead, the *Richmond* found herself near the shore, and attempted to turn, but only succeeded in getting half-way round, with her broadside up and down the river. Orders were then given to the two sailing-sloops to proceed down the Southwest Pass, while the *Richmond* covered their retreat.

As the ram passed up the river she fired a rocket. Immediately afterward three lights were seen in motion, which gradually brightened and expanded until they were discovered to be fire-rafts, drifting down on the squadron. The *Water Witch* avoided them without difficulty, steering to the northeast, up the stream, while the rafts, left to the wind and current, drifted to the western shore, doing no injury. The rest of the squadron was already out of their reach, on its way to the bar.

Winslow now remained alone in the *Water Witch*, near the Head of the Passes, having interpreted the commanding officer's last signal to mean "Act at discretion," and being under the conviction that a force was still required at this point if the blockade was to be efficiently maintained. The

rest of the squadron apparently took a different view of the state of affairs. It was now daylight and, making a reconnaissance, Winslow discovered the smoke of four steamers, above a bend in the river, and a bark-rigged propeller higher up, having the appearance of a blockade-runner. As the propeller would have a clear path through Pass-à-Loutre unless the squadron could be brought back, the *Water Witch* steamed at full speed down the Southwest Pass until she overtook the retreating blockaders. When she came up with them, the *Richmond* was making a general signal to cross the bar. Winslow ranged up alongside and earnestly represented the necessity of returning immediately up the river, but Pope, deeming the position of the squadron unsafe, overruled the suggestion and ordered the *Water Witch* to the assistance of the sailing vessels. This order was carried out. The *Preble* was piloted across the bar by Davis, the executive of the *Water Witch*, and the gunboat went herself to assist the *Vincennes*; but before Winslow could reach her, the sloop grounded. A moment later the *Richmond* also ran ashore.

In this position the vessels of the squadron found themselves when Hollins came down the Pass with his flotilla. It was now about eight o'clock. The enemy's attack was not maintained with any great spirit, and though the cannonade lasted for a couple of hours, no advantage was gained by either side. As the *Richmond* lay with her broadside up the river, she could rake the channel effectually; and the Confederates, whose force of lightly-armed river-boats was no match for the squadron, kept at a respectful distance from her heavy battery. Their firing was inaccurate, their shells bursting around and beyond the *Richmond*. On the other hand, the *Richmond's* shot fell short. She succeeded once or twice in backing off into deeper water, and drifted down

with the current, grounding finally about a quarter of a mile below the Vincennes; but the little Water Witch pluckily held her position, although she was obliged to keep actively moving to leave a clear space for the Richmond's fire.

The position of the Vincennes would now have become critical had the enemy shown a bold front and approached her; but they kept off, satisfied with a mere demonstration. Then came the most singular incident of this singular conflict. The Richmond made signal to the vessels below the bar to get under way. This was erroneously interpreted on board the Vincennes as an order to abandon the vessel. Captain Handy, apparently himself in some doubt as to his interpretation, sent an officer to the Water Witch asking if such a signal had been made, and announcing that he should defend his vessel. Winslow replied to the question that it was impossible, and suggested to Handy that he should fight his ship. Handy did not adopt the suggestion, however, but concluded to obey the supposed order. Having first caused a slow-match to be applied to the magazine, he manned the boats, and sending a part of his crew on board the Water Witch, he repaired to the Richmond with the rest. From some dramatic fancy, he wrapped a large American ensign about his waist, and in this strange guise he appeared over the side of the commanding officer's vessel. This was at 9.30, when the enemy's forces were beginning to draw off from the attack; and shortly after Captain Handy reached the Richmond they withdrew up the river.

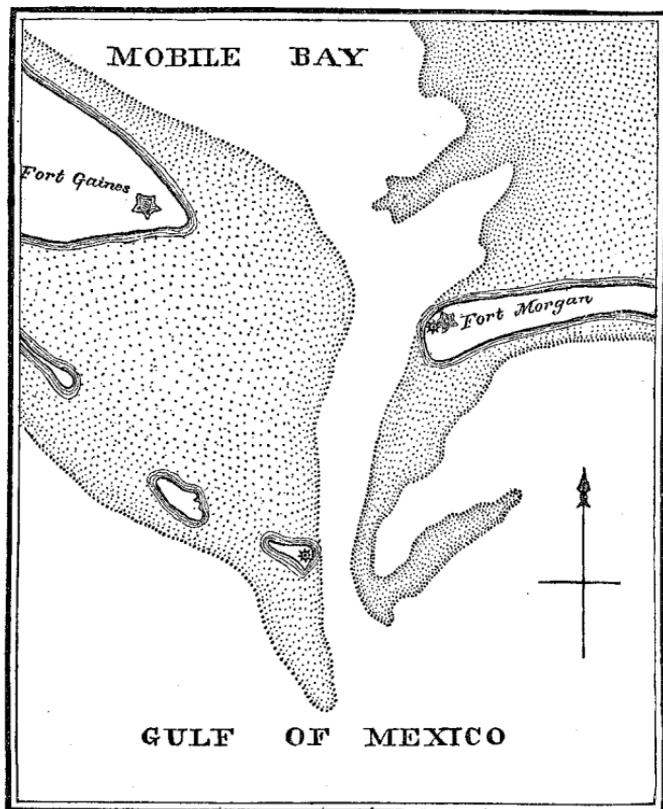
Captain Pope, after waiting "a reasonable time," as he says in his report, for the explosion, and thinking, "from the description of the slow-match," that it had gone out, ordered Handy back to the Vincennes. The latter thereupon divested himself of his colors, and returned to his vessel. The next day she was got afloat, with the assistance of

the South Carolina, which was ordered up from Barrataria. A new disposition was made of the vessels, and the blockade was continued by keeping a ship off the mouth of each of the Passes.

On the 16th of September Ship Island had been evacuated by the Confederates. A force was landed from the Massachusetts, and the fort was occupied. The island became an important station, and facilitated the blockade of Mississippi Sound, where the cruisers might intercept the small vessels running between New Orleans and Mobile. On the 19th of October, the steamer Florida came out, under Commodore Hollins, and engaged the Massachusetts off the island. The Florida, being a faster vessel, and of less draft, was able to choose her distance, and the engagement was carried on at long range. A 68-pounder rifle-shell was exploded in the Massachusetts, but it did not seriously injure the vessel, and the enemy finally retreated out of reach. Ship Island served as the depot of the West Gulf Squadron until the evacuation of Pensacola, which then became the headquarters.

Mobile, the second point of importance in the Gulf, presented few natural difficulties to the blockaders; and the same peculiarities that made it an easy port to defend made it an easy port to blockade. The city lies at the head of a bay twenty-four miles long and ten miles wide in its upper part, expanding to twenty miles at its southern end. Very little, however, of this large sheet of water is accessible for vessels of even moderate draught. The upper anchorage has only twelve feet of water. The lower anchorage has from eighteen to twenty feet, and is five miles north of Mobile Point, at the main entrance to the bay. This entrance lies between two long, narrow sand-spits, and is approached by a channel running north and south. The channel, five miles

in length, and only half a mile wide at its narrowest point, has at its southern extremity a bar, upon which there is a depth of nearly twenty-one feet. The northern end was pro-



Entrance to Mobile Bay.

tected by two forts, one of them, Fort Morgan, a work of considerable strength. But as the entrance of the channel was five miles from the forts, the blockading squadron could

take a position close to the bar; and the blockade was reduced to a limited area. At this point, therefore, it could be maintained more effectually and by a smaller force than at almost any other place of trade on the coast.

There were two other entrances to the bay, one to the westward, with so little water as to be comparatively unimportant, and the other to the northeast, extending, like the Beach Channel at Charleston, close along the shore, and terminating directly under Fort Morgan, just as the northeast channel at Charleston terminated at Fort Moultrie. Though it was less than twelve feet deep at low water, and therefore does not appear on the map, it could be used, when the tide served, by many of the blockade-runners; and when they had once entered, it was next to impossible to cut them out. Additional blockading vessels were generally stationed at both these side-entrances.

Early in the war, the force off Mobile consisted sometimes of a single vessel, which might be found cruising eight or ten miles from the entrance; but after the first year a really efficient force was stationed off the port, and toward the end the vessels lay within two hundred yards of the bar buoy, often with a single gunboat posted inside the channel.<sup>1</sup> Especially after the second escape of the *Florida*, the officers of the squadron were put on their mettle, and during the year before its capture, Mobile was a difficult port for blockade-runners to attempt.

The simplest operations on the blockade, however, were liable to a variety of accidents and incidents, and no service

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<sup>1</sup> The old theory with reference to the danger of lying off Mobile finds expression in the following passage of Blunt's *Coast Pilot* (ed. 1841): "Those off Mobile should recollect the necessity of getting an offing as soon as there are appearances of a gale on shore, either to weather the Balize or, which is better, to take in time the Road of Naso, as destruction is inevitable if you come to anchor outside Mobile Bar during the gale."

demanding a higher degree of preparation and perseverance in action. This was illustrated again and again. A case occurred early in 1862, which will serve as one instance out of many. On the 20th of January, the steamer R. R. Cuyler, watching the eastern passage over Mobile bar, discovered a schooner at anchor, near the shore, several miles to the eastward. The Cuyler was commanded by Lieutenant Francis Winslow, the same officer who had shown his judgment and courage in the affair at the Head of the Passes. Apparently it was a simple enough matter for the Cuyler, a fast and well-armed steamer, to make the schooner an easy prize. As the Cuyler approached, however, the blockade-runner got under way, and steered for the beach. Here she grounded, her crew making for the land. A boat was sent to take possession, and the Cuyler was anchored as near the shore as she could safely go.

Meantime, a party of men had collected on the beach, and opened a sharp fire of musketry, under cover of the dunes. This was returned from the Cuyler, and with the help of an occasional shell, the steamer silenced the fire from the shore. A hawser was carried out, and an attempt was made to start the schooner. The hawser was parted by the strain; and a second attempt met with a similar result, except that this time the hawser fouled the Cuyler's propeller. The largest hawser in the ship was now made fast to the schooner's foremast, and the working party was recalled; but just as they got off, their boat swamped. Two other boats at once put off to the rescue, and, as they approached, received a warm fire from the sand-hills, the enemy having now gathered in considerable force. As the Cuyler's stern was secured to the schooner, and her propeller was still clogged, her broadside could not be brought to bear, and she could only answer with small arms. One of the boats had a howitzer; but half her

crew, including the officer in charge, were already disabled, and the four men who remained could not use the gun. At this critical juncture, the Huntsville arrived with two of the Potomac's cutters in tow. Master Schley pulled gallantly in with the cutters, and the Huntsville opened on the beach; and a series of mishaps which had nearly resulted in disaster finally ended in success.

The most prominent event in the history of the blockade of Mobile was the daring passage of the Confederate cruiser Florida past the blockading squadron, on two separate occasions. The first was on the 4th of September, 1862. At this time the blockade was maintained by the sloop-of-war Oneida, and the gunboats Winona and Cayuga. The senior officer was Commander George H. Preble of the Oneida. The Oneida was one of the four sloops built at the beginning of the war, and she was armed with two XI-inch guns, four 32-pounders, and three Dahlgren 30-pounders. The frigate Susquehanna had been lying off the port, but had gone to Pensacola for repairs five days before. The gunboats Pinola, Kanawha, and Kennebec were also attached to the blockading squadron, and temporarily absent for repairs or coal. On the evening of the day before, the Cayuga had been sent to Petit Bois and Horn Island, the entrances of Mississippi Sound, which had been left unguarded. The boilers of the Oneida needed some slight repairs, and on the morning of the day in question, the fire had been hauled under one boiler, while a full pressure of steam was kept on the other. The repairs were nearly completed soon after noon, and at 3.45 P.M., the fire was again started, though a working pressure of steam was not obtained for some time, and the speed of the vessel was reduced from ten knots to seven. The blockading force, therefore, on this critical day, consisted only of the Oneida, undergoing repairs, and the Winona.

On the 7th of August the Confederate cruiser Florida had left Nassau, where she had been lying for three months, and had put into Cardenas in Cuba. Intelligence of this fact had been received at Pensacola, the headquarters of the squadron, but no intimation had been sent to the blockading officer off Mobile, though several vessels had come from Pensacola in the meantime. The Florida was in a crippled state; her crew was short; what men she had were most of them sick with yellow fever; and her battery was unprovided with the necessary equipments. Her captain, Maffitt, found it necessary to make a port where he could obtain a crew, and the equipments that he needed; and he decided to attempt Mobile. Knowing that his ship was an exact duplicate of the English gun-vessels that were constantly cruising on the coast and going in and out of the blockaded ports, he adopted the bold course of personating an Englishman, and attempting to run the blockade of Mobile in broad daylight.

At 3.35 on the afternoon of the 4th, the squadron off the port, composed of the Oneida and the Winona, had sighted a sail to the southward and westward, and the Winona was ordered in chase. The sail was found to be the United States man-of-war schooner Rachel Seaman; and the two vessels were returning towards the Oneida, when at five o'clock another sail was reported in the southeast. She was presently discovered to be a steamer with a barkantine rig, burning bituminous coal, and heading directly for the senior officer's vessel. Satisfied that she was an English gun-vessel inspecting the blockade, Preble got under way, and went to quarters, steering for the stranger's port bow. The latter had been carrying a pennant, and she now hoisted the English ensign.

The rules adopted on the blockade allowed foreign ships-of-

war the privilege of entering the blockaded ports ; but this was of course never done without first communicating with the squadron outside. No vessel, whatever her character or nationality, can be permitted to run past a blockading squadron without this formality. As the Oneida approached the supposed Englishman, she put her helm to starboard in order not to pass him, and came around until she was heading in the same direction, still a little on his port bow. He kept on at full speed, and when at a distance of about one hundred yards the Oneida hailed him. Receiving no reply, she fired a shot across his bow, from the rifled pivot gun on the forecastle, followed quickly by another, also across his bow, and by a third, close to his forefoot. As these produced no impression, the order was given to fire into him, and the starboard broadside was immediately discharged. This is stated to have been done three minutes after the first shot was fired. But with a blockade-runner alongside running fourteen knots to the blockader's seven, time is counted by seconds. When the broadside was fired, the stranger's ensign and pennant were hauled down. It turned out that orders were given on board the Florida, for such she proved to be, to hoist the Confederate flag, but the quartermaster lost his fingers in the attempt, and the vessel kept on her course without any colors. An attempt was also made on board the Florida to loosen sail ; but the Oneida's fire drove the men out of the rigging. According to Maffitt, "had their guns been depressed, the career of the Florida would have ended then and there." The Winona and Rachel Seaman joined in the firing, from a greater distance ; but the Florida did not slacken her speed, and made no attempt at resistance. An XI-inch shell from the Oneida passed through the coal-bunker on the port side, but did not explode. Another exploded close to the port gangway. A third entered a few inches above the water-

line, and passed along the berth-deck ; and a shot from the Winona went through the cabin and pantry.

During the firing the Florida had been gaining rapidly on her assailants, and she now passed ahead, making directly for the entrance of the channel. The Oneida was obliged to yaw, to bring her guns to bear, but the chase was continued until the Florida had crossed the bar. Then the blockading vessels hauled off. An hour later, the Florida was safely anchored under the guns of Fort Morgan.

After remaining four months at Mobile, repairing and completing her equipments, the Florida came out. This time no disguise was possible, and when his ship was ready, Maffitt only waited for a northerly wind and a dark night. On the afternoon of January 15, the prospect seemed favorable, and the Florida ran down to Mobile Point. The violence of the wind delayed her for a few hours, but at two o'clock on the morning of the 16th, she weighed and stood out by the main ship-channel across the bar.

The blockading fleet now consisted of seven vessels. Among these was the R. R. Cuyler, a fast steamer that had been sent down especially to stop the Florida. When Maffitt had come down in the afternoon, he could see the blockading vessels aligned off the main entrance, two miles from the bar. He was also sighted from the squadron ; and the Cuyler was ordered to change her position, and be prepared to give chase, with the Oneida. Between two and three o'clock in the morning, the enemy was reported. He passed between the Cuyler and the flagship Susquehanna, at a distance of three hundred yards from the former. After a considerable delay, a part of the squadron started in pursuit. It is stated by an officer of the Cuyler, in a letter quoted by Maffitt, that half an hour was lost in getting under way, owing to a regulation of the ship by which the officer of the watch

was required to report and to wait for the captain to come on deck before slipping the cable. The *Oneida*, when she saw the signal from the flagship, beat to quarters, but remained at anchor; and at 3.50, "having seen no vessel running out, beat a retreat."<sup>1</sup> So says her log. The *Cuyler*, however, saw the *Florida* distinctly, and chased her during the rest of the night and the whole of the day; but though the blockading steamer could make at times fourteen knots, her highest speed that day was twelve and a half. At night the *Florida* changed her course and ran off to Cuba, where she was burning prizes the next day, while the *Cuyler* was looking for her in the Yucatan channel.

On the day after the *Florida* ran out, the *Oneida* was sent to Key West with despatches for Admiral Bailey, informing him of the escape of the *Florida*. Bailey sent her to the coast of Cuba; but she missed the Confederate cruiser, and Wilkes, commanding the Flying Squadron, having fallen in with her, constituted her a part of his force, as well as the *Cuyler*, to the no small injury of the blockade; an act which subsequently brought down upon him the displeasure of the Department.

Galveston, the third point of importance in the Gulf, was, like Mobile, comparatively easy of blockade, except against vessels of the lightest draft. The absence of strong fortifications, especially in the early part of the war, enabled the blockading vessels to lie near the shore; and the town was exposed to the fire of the squadron, as it found to its cost in August, 1861, when a shore battery fired upon one of the South Carolina's tenders. Alden was then commanding the blockading force, and he brought the South Carolina, which drew only twelve feet, within a mile of the shore, and opened

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<sup>1</sup> Meaning "beat *the* retreat."

on the batteries. One or two of his shells fell in the town, which led to a protest from the foreign consuls against bombardment without notice; but the injury to the town was afterwards shown to be accidental.

Occupied as he was with active operations in the Mississippi, Farragut early turned his attention to the necessities of the Gulf blockade. In a letter written home shortly after his arrival, he had said: "My blockading shall be done inside as much as possible." The special charge of the vessels in the Gulf was entrusted to Commodore Henry H. Bell, and the steps already taken to convert the blockade of prominent points into an occupation were continued, especially to the westward of the Mississippi, on the coast of Louisiana and Texas. The principal entrances were Atchafalaya Bay and the Calcasieu, on the coast of Louisiana, Sabine Pass, at the western boundary of the State, and Galveston, Pass Cavallo, Aransas, and Corpus Christi, in Texas. Several small vessels were sent to operate in connection with a detachment of troops in Atchafalaya and its inner waters, under Lieutenant-Commander Buchanan. These operations continued for a long period, though Buchanan was killed two months after his arrival, in an engagement in the Tèche. The other points were seized by different expeditions, whose operations were attended with varying success; and on the coast of Texas, blockade and occupation alternated at the different passes with considerable frequency during the rest of the war. One great difficulty in holding the occupied points was the want of troops. In December, 1862, Farragut writes: "It takes too much force to hold the places for me to take any more, or my outside fleet will be too much reduced to keep up the blockade and keep the river open"—two primary considerations in the operations of the squadron.

At all the passes on the coast of Texas and Louisiana there

had been considerable blockade-running by small craft from Havana. To break it up and seize the passes three expeditions were sent out, one to Corpus Christi, one to Calcasieu and Sabine Pass, and one to Galveston. The first of these, under Acting-Lieutenant Kittredge, consisted of the bark Arthur, the steamer Sachem, the yacht Corypheus, and one or two smaller sailing-vessels. There were only about one hundred men in all the vessels. Kittredge was confident of success, but he could hardly have counted on meeting with serious opposition. Corpus Christi lies at the mouth of the Nueces River, on a bay which is enclosed by the long narrow islands that make a double coast along nearly the whole line of the Texas shore. Entering the lagoon, Kittredge proceeded up the bay. On August 16 and 18 attacks were made upon the city, and a battery which had been thrown up on the levee was silenced. On the 18th, a landing party of thirty men with a howitzer was sent into the town, but by this time the enemy had collected a considerable force, estimated at five hundred men; and though their attack was repulsed, there was no possibility of holding the place, and the landing party was withdrawn. The vessels, however, continued to cruise inside of the Passes of Corpus Christi and Aransas. Several vessels were destroyed or captured, and the blockade became really efficient. The only casualty was the capture of Kittredge and his gig's crew, when making an incautious reconnoissance.

The second expedition, under Acting-Master Crocker, set out in September for the Sabine River. The importance of this point as an entrance for blockade-runners had been underrated, and no adequate blockade had been established. A railroad crossed the river at a point not very far above Sabine City, and the town was actively occupied in the exportation of cotton and the reception of large quantities of munitions

of war. The expedition, consisting of the steamer Kensington and the schooner Rachel Seaman, found the mortar-schooner Henry Janes lying off the entrance. The Janes constituted the whole blockading force, and she had been there only a few days. Crocker was an energetic officer, and at once set about active operations. The vessels ascended the river and attacked the fort protecting Sabine City. The fort was soon evacuated and the city surrendered. Crocker then made a reconnoissance at the two entrances to the eastward, Mermentau and Calcasieu, and on his return captured a blockade-running schooner, the Velocity, which he armed and manned as a cruiser. Going once more to Calcasieu, he pulled up the river eighty miles in boats, and captured the steamer Dan, which he also fitted out for service, putting on board a rifled 20-pounder and a howitzer. This new acquisition was taken around to Sabine, and a few days later Crocker moved her up the river, and destroyed the railroad bridge, although the enemy were posted there in force. On his return, he found that the pickets from a camp of the enemy's cavalry, five miles back of Sabine City, had given some annoyance. Landing with a party of fifty men and a howitzer, Crocker marched to the place, drove off the enemy, burned their stables, and broke up their encampment. After these gallant and successful operations, to which were added the capture of several blockade-runners, Crocker returned in the Kensington to Pensacola, leaving the Rachel Seaman, and the prize-vessels Dan and Velocity to keep up a real blockade at Sabine Pass.

The expedition to Galveston was under the command of Commander W. B. Renshaw, and consisted of the ferry-boat Westfield, Renshaw's vessel, another ferry-boat, the Clifton, under Lieutenant-Commander Law, the side-wheel steamer Harriet Lane, Commander Wainwright, and the gunboat

Owasco, Lieutenant-Commander Wilson. The squadron, though small, was a formidable one to send against Galveston, which was imperfectly protected. All the vessels carried for their size heavy batteries.<sup>1</sup>

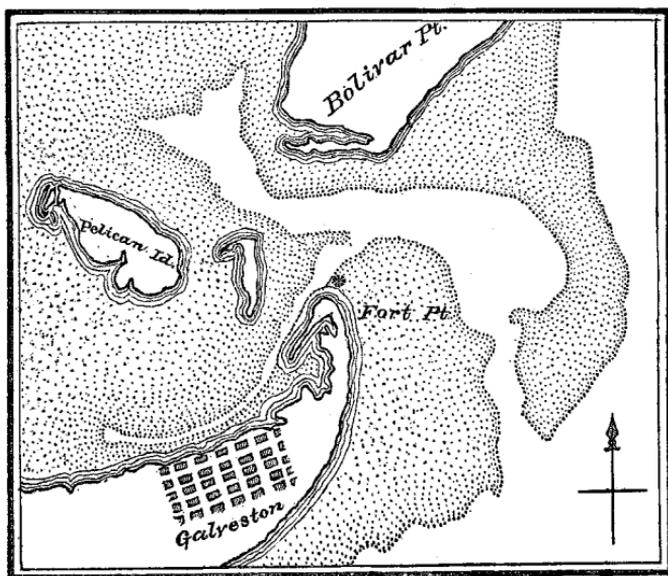
No fighting took place, however. Several days were spent in negotiations, and a truce was granted by Renshaw, under a verbal stipulation that the force on shore should not be increased. The Confederates took advantage of this somewhat loose arrangement to carry off the guns from the fortifications—a proceeding against which Renshaw remonstrated unsuccessfully. At the end of the truce, the city was surrendered, and the fleet thenceforth occupied a secure position inside the bay.

Captain Renshaw requested that a military force should be sent to hold Galveston, and reported that two or three hundred men, with half a dozen pieces of artillery, could easily defend themselves on Fort Point or Pelican Island. An expedition was accordingly fitted out, which was to land at Galveston, and make that point the base of military operations. The first detachment of troops consisted of three companies of a Massachusetts regiment, under Colonel Burrill, numbering two hundred and sixty men, but without any artillery. This force was clearly inadequate to hold the place; but with such an efficient squadron, it seemed unlikely that the enemy would be able to accomplish any great results by an attack, particularly as they had no vessels specially adapted for hostilities in those waters. This ab-

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<sup>1</sup> The general statement gives so imperfect an idea of the powerful armament of Renshaw's squadron, and especially of the ferry-boats, that it may be worth while to mention the guns in detail. They were as follows: Westfield—One 100-pounder rifle, four VIII-inch shell guns (56 cwt.), one IX-inch. Clifton—two IX-inch, four heavy 32-pounders (57 cwt.), one 30-pounder. Harriet Lane—three IX-inch, two 24-pound howitzers. Owasco—one XI-inch, one 20-pounder Parrott, one 24-pound howitzer.

sence of an enemy in force seems to have given Renshaw a false sense of security, and he neglected to destroy the railroad bridge connecting Galveston with the mainland—a fatal omission. Whatever may be the disadvantages under which an enemy labors, there is always danger to be apprehended for a small squadron lying in his waters; and nothing can justify the want of vigilance or of preparation.



Galveston Harbor and Entrance.

By the end of November Farragut held nearly all the principal points in the West Gulf except Mobile. About this time, he writes: "We shall spoil unless we have a fight occasionally. Blockading is hard service, and difficult to carry out with perfect success, as has been effectually shown at Charleston, where they run to Nassau regularly once a week. We have done a little better than that; we take them now

and then. I don't know how many escape, but we certainly make a good many prizes." Farragut was not quite accurate in his comparison, as the number of prizes reported for Charleston in 1862 considerably exceeded that at Mobile. In December he says again of the blockade at the latter place: "We have taken or destroyed all the steamers that run from Havana and Nassau except the Cuba and Alice, and I hope to catch those in the course of time."

But Farragut's hope of improving the efficiency of the Gulf blockade was destined to be rudely shattered. It was only a few days after he wrote the letter just quoted that the aspect of affairs on the coast of Texas was suddenly changed by the defeat of the squadron at Galveston, and the consequent cessation of the blockade at that point.

On the last day of December, intimations were received by both commanders at Galveston, ashore and afloat, that an attack would be made that night. The affair was therefore no surprise; in fact, the presumption is that it was expected. Moreover, there was a bright moonlight on the night chosen for the attack; and the steamers of the approaching force were seen in the bay above, both by the Clifton and the Westfield. This was about half-past one on the morning of the 1st of January.

At this time the troops were occupying a wharf in the town, in order that they might have the fleet as a base. The small steamer *Sachem*, which had been a part of Kirtledge's force at Corpus Christi, had come in from Aransas two days before, in a broken-down condition. The schooner-yacht *Corypheus* had come with her as escort, and the two vessels were lying opposite the wharf. The *Harriet Lane* was stationed higher up the channel, to the westward, and therefore nearer the enemy. The *Westfield* lay three or four miles off, in Bolivar channel, a body of water to the north-

ward of the town, only accessible from the harbor of Galveston by a roundabout passage to the eastward. With the Westfield were the schooner Velocity, which Crocker had captured at Sabine Pass, and some transports and coal-barks. The Clifton and Owasco were about midway between the two groups of vessels.

Though the enemy first made their appearance at half-past one, it was three o'clock before the attack began in the town, and only at daylight that the Confederate steamers reached the Harriet Lane, the nearest of the blockading force. The latter was at the time under way, and anticipated the attack, herself taking the offensive. Her opponents were two river-steamers, the Bayou City and the Neptune, the first armed with a rifled 68-pounder, the second with two small brass pieces. Each carried from 150 to 200 men, and both were barricaded with cotton bales, twenty or more feet above the water-line.

As the two steamers came down, the Harriet Lane advanced to meet them, firing her bow gun. The Bayou City replied, but her gun burst at the third fire. The Harriet Lane then ran into her, carried away her wheel-guard, and, passing, gave her a broadside, which did her little damage. The Neptune then rammed the Harriet Lane, but she was herself so much injured by the collision that she backed off out of action, and soon after sank on the flats in eight feet of water. The Bayou City rammed the Lane in her turn, and her bow catching under the guard-rail of the other vessel, she was held fast. A sharp fire of musketry was now exchanged between the two vessels, which caused no great mortality on either side, though it inflicted an irreparable loss on the Federal steamer by wounding the captain and first lieutenant, Wainwright and Lea, both excellent officers. The fire drove the Harriet Lane's crew from their guns, and

the enemy boarded, and, after a short struggle, carried the vessel. Wainwright was killed at the head of his men, defending his ship gallantly to the last, and fell after having received seven wounds. Lea had already been mortally wounded before the enemy boarded.

After Wainwright fell, no defence was attempted. The surviving senior officer, an acting-master, almost immediately surrendered, though less than a dozen men were seriously hurt out of his crew of 112. Upon this proceeding Farragut makes the following brief comment: "It is difficult to conceive of a more pusillanimous surrender of a vessel to an enemy already in our power."

Meantime the other vessels were variously occupied. The *Sachem* and *Corypheus*, lying near the wharf held by the troops, supplied in some measure the want of artillery; and the battle on shore, which had begun about three o'clock, was kept up until daylight, the Confederates gradually coming closer to our lines. The *Owasco*, at the beginning of the engagement in the city, had moved up to a position between the *Sachem* and *Corypheus*, and united with them in the support of the troops. When daylight showed the *Harriet Lane* engaged with two of the enemy's vessels, the *Owasco* moved up to assist her, occasionally touching the ground, as she steamed up the channel, which was two hundred yards wide at this point. After proceeding a short distance, she was driven back by the small-arm fire of the *Bayou City*; and when the howitzers of the *Lane* opened on her, she backed down below the *Sachem* and *Corypheus*, and took up her berth opposite the town.

It remains to account for the two other steamers, the *Westfield* and the *Clifton*, which, despite the fact that they were ferry-boats, were well-fitted to act with effect in such an encounter as this. The *Westfield* got under way at the first

sight of the enemy's steamers, but had no sooner begun to move than she went fast aground. It was high water at the time, and Renshaw signalled for assistance. In response to the signal, Lieutenant-Commander Law took the Clifton around to Bolivar channel, and made an effort to get the Westfield afloat. In the midst of this operation, the attack began in the town, and Renshaw sent the Clifton back to support the other vessels.

The moon had now gone down, and in the darkness Law made his way back slowly, shelling the Confederate batteries as he passed Fort Point, the eastern end of Galveston Island. On his arrival opposite the town, he came to anchor. According to the report of the Court of Inquiry, the Clifton "did not proceed up to the rescue of the Harriet Lane, owing to the failure of the Owasco, the intricacy of the channel, and the apprehension of killing the crew of the Harriet Lane, who were then exposed by the rebels on her upper deck."

The enemy now sent a flag of truce to demand the surrender of the vessels, at the same time offering the privilege of taking one out of the harbor with the crews of all. The bearer of the demands announced the capture of the Lane, and the death of Wainwright and Lea, and represented that two-thirds of her crew were killed and wounded—a misrepresentation in which he was sustained by an officer of the Harriet Lane, whom he brought with him. It appears that the object of this proceeding was to gain time. Law received the message, made a verbal arrangement for a truce, in which the status quo was to be maintained, and went in a boat to the Westfield, to refer the question to Renshaw. After a long delay, which the Confederates, taking advantage of the absence of written stipulations, occupied in bringing down the Harriet Lane, moving up their artillery, and making prisoners of the troops, Law returned with Renshaw's refusal.

The truce being now ended, Law proceeded to carry out his instructions, which were to take the vessels out of the harbor ; a movement that was accomplished successfully and with celerity. It was Renshaw's intention to blow up the *Westfield*, which was still hard aground, and to come out in one of the army transports. By some one's carelessness or negligence, the explosion took place prematurely, and Renshaw, together with some of his officers, and a few of his crew, who had not yet been transferred, were killed. The remainder of the vessels, except the two coal-barks, crossed the bar ; and in view of the fact that the remains of the squadron were not deemed equal to an engagement with the *Harriet Lane*, they steamed off at once to Southwest Pass, and the blockade of Galveston was raised.

The blockade did not long remain broken. Immediately after the arrival of the *Clifton*, Admiral Farragut sent Commodore Bell to Galveston with the *Brooklyn*, the *Hatteras*, and several gunboats, to resume the blockade. They arrived off the town on the 8th, so that the interruption lasted only seven days. Had they been a day or two later, they would probably have found the *Alabama* lying snugly in the port. As it was, she was sighted outside, and the *Hatteras* was sent to overhaul her. The chase resulted in an encounter twenty-five miles from Galveston, which lasted thirteen minutes, and which ended in the sinking of the *Hatteras*. The squadron cruised all night in search of the *Hatteras*, and finding the wreck in the morning returned to Galveston.

In consequence of the withdrawal of the squadron from Galveston, after the capture of the *Lane*, a proclamation was issued, on the 20th of January, by Magruder, the Confederate General commanding in Texas, declaring that the blockade had ceased, and inviting neutrals to resume commercial intercourse until an actual blockade had been re-established

“with the usual notice demanded by the law of nations.” Though the blockade had indisputably been raised, the proclamation was a little late in giving the information, and Bell replied by a counter-proclamation of the same date, giving a general warning that an actual blockade was in existence. To another proclamation of Magruder’s, announcing the cessation of the blockade at Velasco, a port forty miles to the southward of Galveston, Bell could make no reply, as the only vessel assigned to that point was on duty off Aransas.

Shortly after these events, on the 21st, an attack was made on the *Morning Light* and *Velocity*, two sailing-vessels blockading Sabine Pass. The enemy’s force consisted of two “cotton-clad” steamers. One of the steamers was armed with a rifled 68-pounder, the other with two 24-pounders. The wind was light and the blockaders were manœuvred with difficulty; and after some resistance they surrendered. On receiving news of the event, Commodore Bell despatched the *New London* and the *Cayuga* to Sabine. When they arrived they found that the *Morning Light*, which was too deep to cross the bar, had been set on fire, and was still burning. Bell’s promptness took away any foundation for a claim that the blockade was raised, and the incident led to the conclusion that it was impossible to maintain a blockade with small sailing-vessels at points where the enemy had a force of steamers. Altogether the month of January, 1863, was a disastrous period on the Texas blockade.

During the rest of the year there was little change in the state of affairs. An attack on Sabine Pass, now strongly defended, was made by an expedition under Acting-Lieutenant Crocker, who had conducted the successful affair at the same point the year before. Upon this occasion Crocker had a larger force, and a detachment of troops was ordered

to co-operate. The expedition, however, was a failure. The Clifton and Sachem were forced by the fire of the fort to surrender, and the other vessels, with the transports, were withdrawn. Toward the end of the year 1863, and in the early part of 1864, a series of combined operations made by the army and navy resulted in the occupation of Brazos, Aransas, and Pass Cavallo, and the blockade of these ports was thenceforth discontinued. In the following summer, it became necessary to withdraw the troops for operations elsewhere, and early in September the occupation was again replaced by a blockade, which continued till the end of the war.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BLOCKADE-RUNNERS.

DURING the early part of the war blockade-running was carried on from the Capes of the Chesapeake to the mouth of the Rio Grande. It was done by vessels of all sorts and sizes. The most successful were the steamers that had belonged to the Southern coasting lines, which found themselves thrown out of employment when the war broke out. The rest were small craft, which brought cargoes of more or less value from the Bahamas or Cuba, and carried back cotton. They answered the purpose sufficiently well, for the blockade was not yet rigorous, speed was not an essential, and the familiarity of the skippers with the coast enabled them to elude the ships-of-war, which were neither numerous nor experienced in the business. By April, 1861, the greater part of the last year's cotton crop had been disposed of, and it was estimated that only about one-seventh remained unexported when the blockade was established. Cotton is gathered in September, and shipments are generally made in the winter and spring, and considerable time must consequently elapse before a new supply could come into the market. The proclamation of the blockade caused for a time a cessation of regular commerce; and it was only after a considerable interval that a new commerce, with appliances specially adapted to the altered state of things, began to develop. Meantime illicit trade in a small way flourished.

The profits were considerable, though not comparable to those of later years ; and the work required neither skill nor capital.

This guerilla form of contraband traffic gradually decreased after the first year, though there was always a little going on from the Bahamas, and on the coast of Texas. By the end of the second year it was only to be found in out-of-the-way nooks and corners. Little by little the lines were drawn more tightly, as Dupont threw vessels into the inlets below Charleston, and Goldsborough into the Sounds of North Carolina, while the blockading force grew from a dozen vessels to three hundred. In all the squadrons the burning and cutting out of schooners gave frequent occupation to the blockading forces, and the smaller fry were driven from their haunts. As these vessels were captured or destroyed one by one, there was nothing to replace them, and they gradually disappeared.

Meantime the blockade was beginning to tell both upon friends—or, to speak with exactness, upon neutrals—and upon enemies. The price of cotton decreased at the South, and advanced abroad. The supply was short, the crop of 1861 being about half that of the previous year; East India cotton had not yet come into the market, and the demand was great. The price of manufactured goods at the South advanced enormously. The time was ripe for judicious action ; and the Liverpool cotton-merchant, who in the winter of 1861–62 had found ruin staring him in the face, suddenly awoke to the fact that the ports of the South were an Eldorado of wealth to the man who could go in and come out again in safety.

With cotton at fourpence a pound in Wilmington and two shillings a pound in England, the Liverpool merchant was not a man to hesitate long. Blockade-running from Europe

had already been attempted, but the profits had not been sufficient to outweigh the risk of capture during the transatlantic voyage. Now, however, when half-crowns could be turned into sovereigns at a single venture, capitalists could afford to run almost any risk; and as it happened, at the very time when the profits increased, a plan was devised to lessen the danger. Attempts had already been made to obviate the risk by a fictitious destination to Nassau or Bermuda; but the capture and condemnation of one or two vessels proved this device to be a failure. The plan of transshipment was then adopted, and two vessels were employed, each specially fitted for its peculiar service, one for the long and innocent passage across the ocean, the other for the short but illegal run to the blockaded port; and liability to confiscation was thus reduced to a minimum. Capital was invested in large amounts in the new industry; shrewd north-countrymen embarked in it, and companies were formed to carry on operations on a large scale. Officers of rank in the English navy, on leave of absence, offered their services, under assumed names, and for large compensation, to the owners of vessels in the contraband trade, and met with distinguished success in their enterprises. Doubtless there were few of these last; but the incognito which they preserved has been respected, and neither their names nor their number have been generally made known.

The Confederate Government did not hesitate to enter the field and take a share in the business. Vessels adapted to the purpose were bought by agents in England, and loaded with munitions of war, and Confederate naval officers under orders from the Department were placed in command. These vessels cleared under the English flag, taking out a sailing captain to comply with the requirements of law. Later they were transferred to the Confederate flag, and

carried on a regular trade between Nassau or Bermuda and Wilmington or some other blockaded port. The Government owned three or four such vessels, and was part-owner in several others. These last were required to carry out cotton on Government account, as part of their cargo, and to bring in supplies. Among the vessels wholly owned by the Government was the Giraffe, a Clyde-built iron side-wheel steamer, of light draft and considerable speed, which had been used as a packet between Glasgow and Belfast. She became famous under a new name, as the R. E. Lee; and under the efficient command of Captain Wilkinson, who had formerly been an officer of our navy, and who was now in the Confederate service, she ran the blockade twenty-one times in ten months, between December, 1862, and November, 1863, and carried abroad six thousand bales of cotton. The cotton was landed at Nassau, the Government not appearing in the transaction as shipper or owner. Here it was entrusted to a mercantile firm, which received a large "commission" for assuming ownership, and by this last it was shipped to Europe under neutral flags. The firm employed for this purpose is reported to have obtained a handsome return from its transactions.

The trade was now reduced to a system, whose working showed it to be nearly perfect. The short-voyage blockade-runners, destined for the passage between the neutral islands and the blockaded coast, began to make their appearance. In these every device was brought into use that could increase their efficiency. Speed, invisibility, and handiness, with a certain space for stowage, were the essentials; to these all other qualities were sacrificed. The typical blockade-runner of 1863-4 was a long, low side-wheel steamer of from four to six hundred tons, with a slight frame, sharp and narrow, its length perhaps nine times its beam. It had

feathering paddles, and one or two raking telescopic funnels, which might be lowered close to the deck. The hull rose only a few feet out of the water, and was painted a dull gray or lead color, so that it could hardly be seen by daylight at two hundred yards. Its spars were two short lower-masts, with no yards, and only a small crow's-nest in the foremast. The deck forward was constructed in the form known as "turtle-back," to enable the vessel to go through a heavy sea. Anthracite coal, which made no smoke, was burned in the furnaces. This coal came from the United States, and when, in consequence of the prohibition upon its exportation enforced by the Government, it could not be obtained, the semi-bituminous Welsh coal was used as a substitute. When running in, all lights were put out, the binnacle and fire-room hatch were carefully covered, and steam was blown off under water. In the latest vessels of this class speed was too much studied at the expense of strength, and some of them were disabled before they reached their cruising-ground.

The start from Nassau or Bermuda was usually made at such a time that a moonless night and a high tide could be secured for running in. A sharp lookout was kept for cruisers on the outside blockade, and the blockade-runner, by keeping at a distance, could generally pass them unobserved. If by accident or carelessness he came very close, he took to his heels, and his speed enabled him to get away. He never hove to when ordered; it was as hard to hit him as to overtake him; a stray shot or two he cared nothing for. Even if his pursuer had the advantage of him in speed, which was rarely the case, he still kept on, and, by protracting the chase for a few hours, he could be sure that a squall, or a fog, or the approach of night would enable him to escape. Wilkinson describes a device which

was commonly employed under these circumstances. In running from Wilmington to Nassau, on one occasion, he found himself hard pressed by a sloop-of-war. His coal was bad, but by using cotton saturated with turpentine, he succeeded in keeping ahead. The chase had lasted all day, and at sunset the sloop was within four miles, and still gaining. The engineer was then directed to make a black smoke, and a lookout was stationed with a glass, to give notice as soon as he lost sight of the pursuer in the deepening twilight. The moment the word came, orders were given to close the dampers, and the volumes of smoke ceased to pour out; the helm was put hard-a-starboard, changing the course eight points; and the blockade-runner disappeared in the darkness, while the cruiser continued her course in pursuit of a shadow.

Having passed the outside blockade successfully, and arrived in the neighborhood of his destination, the blockade-runner would either lie off at a distance, or run in close to the land to the northward or southward of the port, and wait for the darkness. Sometimes vessels would remain in this way unobserved for a whole day. If they found the place too hot and the cruisers too active, one of the inlets at a little distance from the port of destination would give the needful shelter. Masonboro Inlet, to the north of Wilmington, was a favorite resort for this purpose. At night the steamers would come out of hiding and make a dash for the entrance.

The difficulty of running the blockade was increased by the absence of lights on the coast. In approaching or skirting the shore, the salt-works in operation at various points served as a partial substitute. Temporary lights were used at some of the ports to aid the blockade-runners. At Charleston, there was a light on Fort Sumter. At Wilmington, in the first year, the Frying Pan light-ship was taken in-

side the entrance, and anchored under Fort Caswell, where she was burnt in December, 1861, by two boat's crews from the Mount Vernon. At New Inlet, a light was placed on "the Mound," a small battery that flanked the works on Federal Point. In the earlier blockade, the lights of the squadron served as a guide to blockade-runners. After the general practice was discontinued, the plan was adopted of carrying a light on the senior officer's vessel, which was anchored in the centre of the fleet, near the entrance. This fact soon became known to the blockade-runners; indeed, there was little about the squadron that was not known and immediately disseminated at Nassau, that central-office of blockade-running intelligence. Thenceforth it served as a useful guide in making the channel. After a time the blockading officer discovered his error, and turned it to account by changing his position every night, thereby confusing many calculations.

The run past the inshore squadron was always a critical moment, though by no means so dangerous as it looked. It was no easy matter on a dark night to hit, much less to stop, a small and obscure vessel, going at the rate of fifteen knots, whose only object was to pass by. But the service nevertheless called into action all the faculties of the blockade-runner. It required a cool head, strong nerve, and ready resource. It was a combat of skill and pluck against force and vigilance. The excitement of fighting was wanting, as the blockade-runner must make no resistance; nor, as a rule, was he prepared to make any. But the chances, both outside and inshore, were all in his favor. He had only to make a port and run in, and he could choose time, and weather, and circumstances. He could even choose his destination. He always had steam up when it was wanted. He knew the critical moment, and was prepared for it; and

his moments of action were followed by intervals of repose and relaxation. The blockader on the other hand, was in every way at a disadvantage. He had no objective point except the blockade-runner, and he never knew when the blockade-runner was coming. He could choose nothing, but must take the circumstances as they happened to come ; and they were pretty sure to be unfavorable. He was compelled to remain in that worst of all situations, incessant watchfulness combined with prolonged inaction. There would be days and nights of anxious waiting, with expectation strained to the tensest point, for an emergency which lasted only as many minutes, and which came when it was least expected. There was no telling when or where the blow would need to be struck ; and a solitary moment of napping might be fatal, in spite of months of ceaseless vigilance.

At New Inlet, which was a favorite entrance, the blockade-runners would frequently get in by hugging the shore, slipping by the endmost vessel of the blockading line. Even on a clear night a properly prepared craft was invisible against the land, and the roar of the surf drowned the noise of her screw or paddles. Having a good pilot and little depth, she could generally run well inside of the blockaders. After passing the line, she would show a light on her inshore side ; this was answered from the beach by a dim light, followed by another, above and beyond the first. These were the range-lights for the channel. By getting them in line, the blockade-runner could ascertain her position, and in a few moments, she would be under the guns of the fort. When the practice of blockade-running was reduced to a system, a signal-service was organized on shore, and signal officers and pilots were regularly detailed for each vessel. After the fall of Fort Fisher, and before the fact was known,

the duties of the signal-service were assumed by the officers of the Monticello, under the direction of Cushing ; and two well known blockade-runners, the Stag and the Charlotte, were helped in by range-lights from the shore, only to find themselves prizes when they were comfortably anchored in the river.

Vessels passed so often between the squadron and the shore that special measures were taken to stop it. The endmost vessel was so placed as to leave a narrow passage. When the blockade-runner had passed, the blockader moved nearer and closed the entrance, at the same time sending up signal rockets. Two or three of her consorts were in waiting and closed up, and the adventurous vessel suddenly found herself hemmed in on all sides, and without a chance of escape.

Whenever a blockade-runner was hard pressed in a chase, it was a common practice for the captain to run her ashore, trusting to favorable circumstances to save a fragment of his cargo. Communicating with the forces in the neighborhood, he would obtain the co-operation of a detachment of infantry, often accompanied by one or two pieces of artillery, which would harass the parties sent from the blockading vessels to get the steamer off. At Wilmington, lunettes were thrown up along the shore, large enough for two guns, and a field-battery of Whitworth 12-pounders was kept in constant readiness to run down and occupy them. Sometimes the blockaders were able to command the land approaches, and so prevent the people on shore from doing mischief ; but at other times the latter had it all their own way. It was no easy matter in any case to float off a steamer which had been beached intentionally under a full head of steam, especially if the tide was running ebb ; and the fire of one or two rifled guns placed close by on the beach made the operation hazardous. The only course left was to burn the wreck ; and even then, if

the work was not done thoroughly, the chances were that the fire would be extinguished, and the damaged vessel ultimately recovered. In July, 1863, the *Kate*, one of the new English-built craft, after running to Charleston and being chased off, put into Wilmington. She attempted to pass the fleet off New Inlet, but choosing her time badly, she was sighted about five in the morning, and, after a chase, she was run ashore on Smith's Island, and abandoned. The troops came down, but did nothing. A party was sent in from the *Penobscot* to get her off; but this failing, she was set on fire, and the officer in charge of the boat-party reported that he had disabled her so effectually that she would be of no further use. Three weeks later, however, she was floated off by the Confederates, and anchored under the batteries; a position from which she was cut out with some difficulty.

The *Hebe*, a Bermuda steamer, was run ashore a fortnight later on Federal Point, under circumstances generally similar, except that it was blowing a gale from the northeast. A boat sent in from the *Nippon* was swamped, but the crew succeeded in getting on board the *Hebe*. A second boat was driven ashore, and the crew were taken prisoners by the cavalry on the beach. The *Hebe* was covered by a two-gun Whitworth battery and fifty or more riflemen. Other boats put off, and rescued a few of the men on board the steamer. The last boat capsized; and the remaining men of the first party fired the ship, and making for the shore were captured. This time the vessel was destroyed. A few days later the large vessels of the squadron came in, silenced the battery, and finally sent in a landing-party, and brought off the guns.

One night in October of the same year the *Venus*, one of the finest and fastest of the vessels in the Nassau-Wilmington trade, made the blockading fleet off New Inlet. She was

first discovered by the *Nansemond*, commanded by Lieutenant Lamson. Lamson was always on the alert, and his work was always done quickly and thoroughly. After a short chase, he overhauled the *Venus*. When abeam he opened fire on her. Four well-directed shells played havoc with the blockade-runner. The first struck her foremast; the second exploded in the cabin; the third passed through forward, killing a man on the way; and the fourth, striking near the water-line, knocked in an iron plate, causing the vessel to make water fast. This was good practice, at night, with both vessels making nearly fourteen knots. The blockade-runner headed straight for the shore, and she was no sooner hard and fast, than the boarders had taken possession, and captured her officers and crew. As it was impossible to move her, she was riddled with shells and finally burnt where she lay.

One of the prettiest captures made off Wilmington was that of the *Ella and Anna*, by Acting Master J. B. Breck of the *Nippon*, in the following November. Breck was an officer of pluck and resource, and he won a name for himself by his dashing successes on the Wilmington blockade. About five o'clock on the morning of the 9th of November, as he was returning along the shore from a chase near Masonboro Inlet, he discovered a side-wheel steamer to the northward, stealing along toward the entrance of the river. Outside of her lay a blockader, which opened on her with grape, and the blockade-runner, finding herself intercepted, steered directly for the *Nippon* with the intention of running her down. Breck saw the intention, and fixed on his plan in an instant. Heading for the steamer, he formed his boarders on the bow. The blockade-runner dashed on at full speed under a shower of canister, and struck him a blow that carried away his bowsprit and stem. In a moment, his boarders were over the rail and

on the deck of the blockade-runner ; and a few seconds made her a prize. She had on board three hundred cases of Austrian rifles and a quantity of saltpetre ; and the prize-sale netted \$180,000. The *Ella* and *Anna* was taken into the service, and in the next year, under her new name of the *Malvern*, became famous as the flagship of Admiral Porter.

The warfare on both sides was accompanied by a variety of ruses and stratagems, more or less ingenious and successful, but usually turning out to the benefit of the blockade-runner. When a steamer was sighted, the blockading vessel that made the discovery fired signals in the direction she had taken. This was at best an uncertain guide, as the blockaders could only make a rough guess at the stranger's position. The practice was no sooner understood than the enterprising captains at Nassau sent for a supply of signal rockets, and thereafter they were carried as a part of the regular equipment. Running through the fleet, and finding himself discovered, the captain immediately fired his rockets in a direction at right angles to his course ; and the blockaders were sent on a wild-goose chase into the darkness. If there were many of them, they were apt to get in each other's way ; and more than once serious damage was done by a friendly vessel. The *Howquah*, off Wilmington, on a dark night, in September, 1864, had nearly succeeded in making a prize, when the concentrated fire of the batteries, the blockading squadron, and, according to the belief of the commander, of the blockade-runner, proved to be too much for him, and caused him to draw off.

One of the blockade-running captains relates that, on a certain night, when he found himself alongside a vessel of the fleet and under her guns, he was told to heave to. Accordingly, steam was shut off, and he replied that he had stopped. There was a moderate sea, and the boat from the

cruiser was delayed. As it reached the side of the blockade-runner, the captain of the latter gave the order, "Full speed ahead," and his vessel shot away toward the channel. A deception of this kind, whatever may be thought of it abstractly, was one that would be likely to recoil on the blockade-runners. A vessel or two might avoid being sunk by pretending to surrender, but a blockader would hardly be caught twice by such a trick. The next time, instead of hailing before he fired, he would fire before he hailed; and he would be perfectly justified in so doing. Indeed, it is a question whether in a blockade so persistently broken as that of Wilmington, the ordinary rules of action for belligerent cruisers should not be modified, and vessels found *in flagrante delicto*, whether neutrals or not, be destroyed instead of being captured. Certainly, if destruction and not capture had always been the object, fewer blockade-runners would have escaped, and possibly fewer would have undertaken the business. There is always a possibility that a vessel met at sea, however suspicious the circumstances, may be innocent; but when found running through the blockading fleet, her guilt is established, and if there is any question about bringing her to—and at Wilmington there was always rather more than a question—the blockader is not far wrong whose first thought is to inflict a vital injury.

As it was, blockade-running was not an occupation involving much personal danger, and little apprehension was felt about running through the fleet. Calcium lights were burned, and shot and shell flew thickly over and around the entering vessel, but they did not often hit the mark. At Wilmington it was perhaps not so much the inshore blockade that killed the trade as the practice of keeping fast cruisers outside. Until near the end of 1864, when the stringency of the blockade became extreme, the captures were not

numerous enough to take up more than a slight margin of the enormous profits that it netted. These profits were made both on the outward and the inward voyages, and it is hard to say which were the more extraordinary. The inward cargoes consisted of all kinds of manufactured goods, and especially of "hardware," the innocent name under which arms and ammunition were invoiced. The sale of these brought in from five hundred to one thousand per cent. of their cost. The return cargo was always cotton, and the steam-presses at Wilmington, reducing it to the smallest possible bulk, enabled the long, narrow blockade-runners to carry six hundred, eight hundred, or even twelve hundred bales, of five or six hundred pounds each. Even the upper deck was piled up with two or three tiers of bales. As a clear profit of £30,000 each way was no uncommon result, it is easy to believe that owners could afford to lose a vessel after two successful trips. It was the current opinion in the squadron off Wilmington, in the early part of the last year, that two-thirds of the vessels attempting to enter were successful; and it has been estimated that out of the sixty-six blockade-runners making regular trips during the war, forty were captured or destroyed, but only after a successful career for a shorter or longer period. Gradually, in the last few months, too many vessels were caught to make the trade profitable; and it was slowly declining, though it did not cease altogether until the blockade was raised.

As for the compensation of those who did the work, it may be interesting to give the schedule of rates of pay, on board a first-class vessel, when the business was at its height. The figures are given by "A. Roberts," one of the most famous of the *noms de guerre* in the contraband trade of Nassau. The rates are for a single trip from Nassau to Wilmington and back. Half the amount was given as a bounty at the

beginning of the voyage, and half at its successful completion. The amounts are as follows :

Captain .....	£1,000
Chief Officer .....	250
Second and Third Officer .....	150
Chief Engineer .....	500
Crew and firemen (about) .....	50
Pilot .....	750

Besides the money received, officers were able to stow away little cargoes of their own, and so to make on each trip a private speculation; and an occasional cotton-bale was brought out for a friend, by way of making a handsome present. In fact, the blockade-running captains, after six months of employment, could afford to retire with a snug competency for the rest of their life.

The merchants who withdrew early from the business acquired considerable fortunes; but those who kept on until the end met with heavy losses. Any speculation that brings sudden and excessive profits is likely to be overdone; and large amounts of capital were sunk in the last months of the war. At the close, the thriving business of Nassau and Bermuda suddenly collapsed, and they reverted to their former condition of stagnation; while the mercantile enterprise of Liverpool was directed to other and more legitimate channels.