THE BANKS EXPEDITION TRANSPORTS

Report of the Investigating Committee.

GLARING FRAUDS UPON THE GOVERNMENT

THE IMPOSTERS CALLED UPON TO REFUND.

Government Officials Strongly Censured.

Mr. Grimes, from the Select Committee of the Senate on Transports for the War Department, submitted the following report:

The Select Committee appointed in pursuance of the resolution of Dec. 22, 1862, "to inquire into and report to the Senate the facts, including brokerage, in regard to the chartering of transport vessels for the Banks Expedition, the seaworthiness of such vessels, and the character of the men employed to navigate them," and instructed by resolution of Dec. 23 "to inquire into the manner of the employment of transports generally by the Quartermasters of the army, or by the agents of the War Department, the rates at which they were engaged, by whom, for what purpose, and for how long time," beg leave to submit the following report:

The Committee regret that the time allotted to them for the performance of the duty mentioned in the resolution of Dec. 23, was too brief to allow more than an opening of the vast subject of the employment of transports generally by the Quartermasters of the army, or by the agents of the War Department. The examination of witnesses was commenced on the 26th of December, and from that date to the 15th of January the Committee devoted their labors principally to the investigation of the facts relating to the chartering of transports for the Banks Expedition, of which a report has been submitted. Much perplexity has been felt in finding a suitable place to stop the investigation and report the results already reached to the Senate, each fact pointing to others of apparently great importance, and each witness suggesting by his testimony the names of persons who seemed likely to throw much light on the subject. The approaching end of the XXXVIth Congress admonished the Committee that if any practical benefit were to be derived from the investigation, it must be brought to a close at once. The following facts are submitted in the order chronologically of their ascertainment by the Committee:

CHARLES COBLENS AND JOHN F. PICKRELL OF BALTIMORE.

Among the extraordinary developments of this investigation are the facts relating to one Charles Coblens of Baltimore, Md., in whose business relations with the Government, fraud, bribery, and perjury struggled for the most prominent place.

This Mr. Coblens is a Prussian by birth, an Israelite by descent, a peddler and a horse jockey by profession. He is wholly unfamiliar with commercial pursuits, aside from the selling of Yankee notions at retail, and trading horses by the head, and he testifies that he can neither read nor write English. He admits that he has already refunded $1,500 to the Government which had been fraudulently obtained upon sales of horses by bribing the Inspector, that he bribed three of the clerks in Col. Belger's office, and that he has some connection with a sale of damaged corn to the Government. He appeared before the Committee as an extensive shipowner, and would now seem to be a very wealthy person, rejoicing in the possession, in whole or in part, of ten (10) steamers, three barges, and eighty acres of valuable land in the vicinity of Baltimore, though but a few months ago he was comparatively a poor man. The vessels owned in whole or in part by Mr. Coblens are the steamers Patapsco, Baltimore, Telegraph, James Murray, Louisa, Edwin Forrest, Fairy Queen, Cecil, Roswell, and Lily, and the barges Delaware, Miss Mary, and John Warner; all of which are now, or have been under charter to the Government. The following table compiled from the testimony of Mr. Coblens, Mr. A. C. Hall, and Mr. John F. Pickrell, and the reports of Col. Belger and Gen. Meigs, exhibits Mr. Coblens, transactions with the Government in the chartering of transports for the War Department:

Names of Vessel.	Cost of Vessel.	Rate of Charter.
Steamer Patapsco	$[illegible]	$[illegible] per day.
Steamer Baltimore	21,000	250 per day.
Steamer Telegraph	7,000	125 per day.
Steamer Jas. Murray	5,332	100 per day.
Steamer Louisa	5,000	45 per day.
Steamer Edwin Forrest	4,500	60 per day.
Steamer Fairy Queen	4,000	60 per day.
Steamer Cecil	5,000	60 per day.
Steamer Roswell	3,000	60 per day.
Steamer Lily	....	75 per day.
Barge Delaware	2,500	70 per day.
Barge Miss Mary	2,200	25 per day.
Barge John Warner	....	12 per day.
Total	$65,332	$947 per day.

The rules of arithmetic show that Mr. Coblens was receiving money from the Government at the rate of $346,655 per annum on a capital of $65,332, which is equal to 529 per cent on his investment. The cost of the steam-tug Lily, and the barge John Warner, was not ascertained by the Committee, but they are obviously of little value. Mr. Coblens affirms that repairs were put on the steamer Patapsco amounting to $2,500; but the testimony of Capt. William Rice of Baltimore, an experienced steamboatman and familiar with the Patapsco, goes to show that she was worth next to nothing. Capt. Rice says: "He (Hall) subsequently bought an old iron boat called the Patapsco for $1,200; so old that she had been thrown away as perfectly useless by the Commissioner for defending the harbor of Baltimore; they threw her away, and Hall went down and bought her last February or March for $1,200, and put her in his own Coblens's name and chartered her to the Government at $60 per day, as I am informed. She cannot do service enough to pay for the fuel she consumes. * * * She paid for herself before the end of the first month." The running expenses of the Patapsco were not more than $12 per day, probably less; and she yielded a clear profit to her owner at the rate of $36,645 per annum, which is equal to 720 per cent on her aggregate cost, as stated by Coblens. But it would appear from the testimony of Mr. Hall, that she was chartered to the Government at $60 per day before she was sold to Coblens, and therefore before any repairs were put upon her, thus bringing a profit to her owners of 2,250 per cent on their investment.

Hardly less profitable was the charter of the barge Delaware, whose running expenses were not more than $4 per day; Mr. Hall says "$6 or $7 per day." She was chartered to the Government at $70 per day by Mr. Tucker, through Mr. Hall (Capt. Hodges signing the charter party), and her net receipts were at the rate of $21,900 per annum. The cost of the Delaware is stated by Mr. Hall (page 59) at $2,500. Capt. Rice says (page —) that Hall paid $1,600 for her. She was repaired at the Government's expense between July 26 and August 12 (see Col. Belger's report of vessels repaired at Baltimore) to the amount of $1,833 43—Col. Belger paying the bills. Mr. Hall says that she was a large and superior vessel, but Mr. Pickrell informs us (page 67) that she ended her career by sinking at Point Lookout at the mouth of the Potomac. Casting aside larger Mr. Hall's exaggerated valuation, she yielded a profit of 916 per cent per annum. Mr. Pickrell testifies that she had been under charter four months at $50 per day when Coblens bought her—having therefore, paid for herself three times, according to Mr. Hall's statement of her value, before she changed owners. That this chapter of fraud may want no odious and shameless features, Mr. Hall affirms that "Capt. Hodges and Mr. Tucker thought she was the cheapest thing they chartered."

The running expenses of Mr. Coblens's fleet could hardly have exceeded 15 per cent of their earnings, judging from the cases of the Patapsco and Delaware. This would leave a net profit at the rate of $295,095 per annum on the limited capital of $65,000 or $570,000 invested. In addition to the vessels enumerated, the barge Francis appears in Col. Belger's list as having been chartered of Charles Coblens at the rate of $15 per day; but the same vessel appears in Gen. Meigs's list as having been chartered of A. C. Hall, and the Committee believe that in the numerous discrepancies which are found between the two lists, of which more particular mention will be made, Gen. Meigs's is to be regarded as the correct one.

It should be remarked at this point that all the vessels bought by Coblens were under charter to the Government, when purchased, the charters having been generally effected by Mr. Hall, and he receiving five per cent commission on their earnings, and many of them were owned by Hall before passing into Coblens's possession.

Between Mr. Coblens and one John F. Pickrell of Baltimore there existed a curious and extraordinary partnership, not the least remarkable feature of which is furnished by the conflicting testimony of the two persons themselves. Mr. Coblens testifies under oath that Mr. Pickrel is his general partner in the boat business as well as other business transactions with the Quartermaster's Department at Baltimore. Mr. Pickrell testifies under oath that he is not Mr. Coblens's general partner in anything. Coblens says that although he and Pickrell were general partners there was no firm name, no firm signature, and that neither was authorized to sign the other's name. The testimony of the two witnesses agrees as to one thing, namely, that Coblens furnished all the money and Pickrell distributed it and took half the profits, besides charging a commission of 5 per cent on receipts and 2½ per cent on disbursements. Coblens, being unable to read or write English, and having no control over his own funds except what happened to be deposited to his individual credit in bank, testifies that he employed a clerk to act as a check on Pickrell, but never asked the clerk anything about the books, or, as he says, "I don't ask the clerk any questions at all about it." Mr. Pickrell affirms that Mr. Coblens does not keep a clerk, or if he does he (Pickrell) is not aware of it. Mr. Henry Diggs, the person designated by Coblens as his clerk, testifies that he is not Mr. Coblens's clerk, that he is not employed by Coblens in any capacity, that Coblens has no books, and that he (Diggs) is the bookkeeper of John F. Pickrell. Mr. Diggs testifies further that it does not appear from the book that Coblens and Pickrell are partners in any transactions, nor that they are jointly interested in any vessels.

Mr. Coblens and Mr. Pickrell became acquainted for the first time about eighteen months ago. Mr. Coblens is unable to say how he came to form a partnership with Mr. Pickrell, except that somebody recommended him to do so. Mr. Coblens was interrogated on two occasions for the purpose of eliciting the name of the individual who had recommended Mr. Pickrell as a suitable person to take charge of all his property, divide all his profits, and take from 2½ to 5 per cent additional from all his receipts and disbursements. Mr. Coblens was utterly unable on either occasion to recall the name of that individual. Mr. Pickrell's version of the matter is that he first saw Coblens in a back corner of Col. Belger's office; that Col. Belger remarked, "There is a perfect Rothschild, and there is a man who will have my business;" that thereupon Coblens put a sum of money into his (Pickrell's) hands to buy 10,000 bushels of oats; that thereupon he (Pickrell) "bought it and charged it, and put the money to his (Coblens's) credit." From this confidence, transaction the partnership grew to the proportions already indicated. The inherent improbability of this story is lightened by the testimony of Col. Belger, who testifies that he never said that Coblens "should have his business," or "was doing his business."

The following citations from the testimony will illustrate the remarkable character of the partnership between Coblens and Pickrell:

TESTIMONY OF CHARLES COBLENS—PAGE 33.

"Answer—You see he (Pickrell) has got the whole control of his hands. I give him money to pay it and disburse it, and I don't know then how he pays it or whom he pays it to.

"Question—You do not know anything about it?

"Answer—No, Sir.

"Question—You furnish the money, and do not know what becomes of it?

"Answer—He disburses, and I don't know how."

SAME—PAGE 35.

"Question—Do you know of his (Pickrell's) using one cent of his own money in connection with your boat business?

"Answer—I don't know.

"Question—Do you not know that Pickrell is not your partner in the transaction of your boat business?

"Answer—I know he gets half the profits; that is all I can answer. I consider him my partner.

"Question—Don't you know that he is not furnishing one cent for your transactions in the boat business?

"Answer. No, Sir. I don't.

"Question. Can you swear that he is furnishing one cent?

"Answer. No, Sir. I can't.

"Question. You only know that he gets one-half of the profits?

"Answer. That is all.

"Question. You furnish the money?

"Answer. Yes, Sir, and attend to it all."

"Question. You do not know whether you have made a profit or lost since you have been in the business?

"Answer. No, Sir.

"Question. You do not know whether you are worth anything now or are insolvent?

"Answer. No, Sir. I don't; I have made some money; I don't know how much."

Mr. Coblens's testimony consists principally of negations. He is not only unable to tell how much money Mr. Pickrell put into the partnership, or whether he put any in, but he cannot tell how much Coblens himself put in. He does not know how much he was worth when the partnership was formed, nor how much he owed. The only thing pertaining to his business that he is entirely clear about is that "he is an honest man, and an honest man can get along almost anywhere." Mr. Pickrell testifies that Mr. Coblens then congratulated himself on the nature of this business, and is very much pleased with it.

The Committee submit that a partnership, in which there is no firm and no common signature, where one party, having little or nothing to begin with, furnishes all the capital, and within eighteen months prosecutes a business with the Government yielding at the rate of $346,655 per annum, where the other party invests no capital, but receives half the profits and a large commission on gross receipts and disbursements, where the party furnishing the capital does not know how much he furnished, and knows nothing at all about the disbursement of his funds; nor whether he is now worth anything or is insolvent, and yet is perfectly satisfied with the arrangement; where the party furnishing the capital cannot tell who recommended to form such a partnership, and where the other party cannot give an intelligible account of how he came to form the partnership—presents features so astounding that a jury would not give the slightest credence to the testimony which supports it. The Committee are compelled to believe that Mr. Coblens is only a convenient tool in the hands of more astute, if not more unprincipled men.

If any further evidence is needed concerning the nefarious alliance between Coblens and Pickrell, it is furnished in the testimony of Capt. William T. Rice of Baltimore, the former owner of the steamer Cecil, of which more particular mention will be made in another place. The only person connected with the Government, so far as the Committee have discovered, who enjoyed the acquaintance of Mr. Pickrell before the breaking out of the Rebellion, was Mr. John Tucker, late Assistant Secretary of War, who testifies that he has known Pickrell eight or nine years, and that he has heretofore had business transactions with him. None of the witnesses seem to have known Mr. Coblens before the commencement of the war, and nearly all speak of him in contemptuous terms, as a person of no consequence, whose precise position in connection with the transport service or any other business is not divulged.

MR. AMASA C. HALL OF BALTIMORE.

Mr. Amasa C. Hall of Baltimore has played a very conspicuous part in connection with the chartering of transport vessels at that port. Hardly any vessel has been chartered there during the past eighteen months, that has not been secured through his agency, and, of these earnings, from five to twelve per cent has found its way to his pocket. During that time it has been understood among shipowners, agents and brokers, that no vessel could secure a charter of the Quartermaster at Baltimore, unless she was offered by Mr. Hall; and several of them testify that, knowing this, they were compelled, much against their will, to resort to him to do their business.

So singularly exclusive was the monopoly of this business enjoyed by Hall, that it at length attracted the attention of the Quartermaster-General, who called Col. Belger's attention to it by two letters, printed in connection with his testimony. Assistant Secretary Tucker's attention was also called to it more than once by Gen. Meigs (see Gen. Meigs's testimony), but, neither of these officers seemed to have made special effort to correct the abuse. The evidence furnished by Hall himself in his letter to Col. Belger, throws much light on the otherwise intricate question of his monopoly. He says, "The Hon. John Tucker, Assistant Secretary of War, is aware of and fully understands the nature of my business transactions with the Government as an agent for the owners and masters of vessels, and I would respectfully refer to him for any information that Gen. Meigs, Quartermaster-General, may require." This intimation seems to have put a stop to further grumbling, and Mr. Hall went on as prosperously as before.

According to the "list of vessels chartered by the Quartermaster's Department at Baltimore since July 1, 1861, by Col. James Belger," furnished by the Quartermaster-General of the United States Army, of the 200 steamers, brigs, tugs, schooners, ships, and barges thus chartered, 163 were chartered directly from Hall; and the testimony shows that 22 of the remaining 37 were owned by parties for whom he acted, and who paid him not less than five per cent of the earnings of their respective vessels. The Committee are quite confident that, if their time had permitted them to pursue the investigation further in this direction, it would have demonstrated that Hall, in some way, received a broker's commission on nearly if not all the remaining 15 of the 200 vessels included in the list.

An examination of the column of prices at which these vessels were chartered, will furnish data by which to show the enormous revenue derived by Hall, when taken in connection with the fact, abundantly proven, that in no case was his brokerage commission less than five per cent upon the entire earnings of the vessels, and ranged from that figure to ten and twelve per cent. It is true Hall testifies that he only received two and a half per cent on some of these vessels; but he cannot specify the vessels, and only two of the parties with whom the division was made, and his statement as to this point is disproved by his own statements to Belger and others, and by the testimony of one of the parties named by him as a person with whom the commissions were divided.

The Committee have failed to discover any satisfactory reason, why Hall was permitted to enjoy this monopoly of chartering vessels.

There was nothing in his antecedents or character to justify it. He was a poor man eighteen months ago, with a character not wholly above reproach; he is now rich, and fast growing richer, by the receipt of a large daily revenue from commissions upon the earnings of vessels sold to the Government employment. The benefit of this large patronage is almost exclusively upon him cannot be reconciled with any theory of strict integrity on the part of Government officers. Although the testimony may not warrant the conclusion that any officer actually shared with him the profits derived from his business, yet the fact that these officers, who knew all the circumstances, acquiesced in the continuance of this monopoly, should subject them to the most severe reprehension; and it is not easy to suppose that motives of charity alone impelled them to throw such vast sums of money into his pocket. The monopoly itself was ingloriously and blameworthy, but more especially when it is known that Hall was extorting exorbitant commissions from the owners of vessels for his pretended agency.

It is no apology for either Mr. Tucker or Col. Belger for them to say that they did not know, until a recent period, that such commissions were charged. It was their duty to exercise at least ordinary care, attention, and diligence. They should have known, what seems to have been well known by every man connected with the transport business in Baltimore. They were bound to know the character and the conduct of the man they intrusted with public business of such magnitude.

In fact Col. Belger did know it, for he admits that Mr. Hall told him he was receiving five per cent commission on the charters effected through him. The time when he became possessed of this knowledge is shown by the testimony of Mr. Wm. Applegarth of Baltimore, to have been as early at least as January or February, 1864. Mr. Applegarth's statement is important in another point, showing that he offered to charter vessels directly to Col. Belger, and thus save the five per cent to the Government, but that Belger nevertheless required him to go to Hall and pay him the commission. He says: "I then asked him (Belger) why he did it. Said I, Col. Belger, you are imposing me to paying 5 per cent commission when I could serve you with the vessel as low or lower than to Mr. Hall, because I would not have the commission to pay.

"Question—Then Col. Belger knew that Hall compelled you to pay five per cent commission?

"Answer—Yes, Sir; I told him so, and I asked him why he subjected me to it; he said, 'O, Hall is a very clever man,' and turned me off in that way."

Mr. John R. Rhoads of Baltimore also testifies:

"Question—Did you ever apply to Col. Belger to charter your vessels?

"Answer—Yes, Sir.

"Question—What did he say?

"Answer—He said that Mr. Hall was the man.

"Question—To charter your vessels?

"Answer—Yes, Sir."

Mr. Rhoads goes on to say that he paid Hall 7½ per cent on vessels belonging to other parties, chartered through himself and Hall to the Government, and that he took 2½ per cent additional as his own commission; and further adds that "it was 7½ to 12 per cent that came out of the owner."

It is difficult to conceive that Mr. Tucker was ignorant of these monstrous extortions, extending over so long a period of time, and perpetrated upon so many different individuals; and if we believe that he was ignorant, we are driven to the conclusion that he was an unsafe and incompetent public servant.

During all this time Hall was acting in the double capacity of broker for the owners of vessels, and as a sort of agent of the Government. Belger says that whenever he wanted a vessel he said to Hall, "I want such a vessel and I don't want to go into the market for it. You go and pick me out such a vessel and charter it at the lowest rate."

In regard to a large class of vessels chartered by Hall, Belger, in reply to the question, "Were the rates at which Hall chartered the vessels determined by you or him?" answered, "I had nothing to do with that. I just signed those (charter parties) he presented to me to perfect the instruments—to give them official character. I don't know anything about it." And yet, Belger admits that Hall told him he received five per cent on the earnings of the vessels he chartered, and for which Belger was signing the charter parties. From this it would appear that Hall had the power, at his will, to determine the price of the vessels he chartered for Belger, and thus enlarge or diminish the amount of his own commissions.

The Committee have endeavored to discover the motives which led to the employment of Hall. He says himself that some one recommended him to Col. Belger as a suitable person to charter vessels; but he is profoundly ignorant of the name of the person who thus recommended him. The inference fairly deducible from the first fifteen pages of the testimony of Col. Belger would be, that this valuable friend of Mr. Hall was the late Assistant Secretary of War, Mr. John Tucker; for Belger testifies that when he went to Baltimore, he "went there a stranger, and Tucker expressed such confidence in him (Hall), giving him those charters to make up, and he having acted for Capt. Hodges in New-York, I thought he was the very man for me to employ. Capt. Hodges was the Quartermaster at New-York for that duty." It should be borne in mind, however, that Col. Belger was totally ignorant as to the capacity in which Capt. Hodges acted in chartering vessels at New-York. He was entirely subordinate to Mr. Tucker, and only placed his signature to charters already effected by the Assistant Secretary, for the purpose of giving them an official sanction. He had no power to select, inspect or charter, save as personally directed by Mr. Tucker, and acted in all cases precisely as Belger said he did in nineteen out of twenty of the charters he effected, viz: as the mere clerical agent of Tucker. Belger says that nineteen-twentieths of the charters he signed were made "by Hall, by the direction of Mr. Tucker." When it is remembered that, according to Belger's report, appended to his testimony, the number of charters effected by him was 364, and that nineteen-twentieths of these, according to his statement, were really effected by Hall, at the instance of Tucker, though signed by Belger, an estimate may be formed of the magnitude and value of Hall's business. If Belger's statement be true, not less than 360 of these vessels were thus chartered by him, under direction of Tucker, upon all of which Hall became entitled to receive a commission of five per cent, paying Belger five per cent on their gross receipts. Through the same generous agency, Mr. Reybold chartered the Diamond State (375 tons) at $200 per day, the Cecil (350 tons) at $200 per day, and the Gen. Burnside (499 tons) at $300 per day, Capt. Loper himself being part owner of them. Mr. Reybold testifies that his own receipts from these charters were about $1,100 per day, or at the rate of $401,500 per year. Mr. Loper's commission on Mr. Reybold's boats could not have been less than $20,000 per year, for, although he charged no commission on the three boats of which he was part owner, it must be presumed that the amount which he derived from them over and above a fair amount which he derived from them over and above a fair mercantile profit was at least equal to five per cent, otherwise he would have charged the commission. If the Government had hired Mr. Reybold's fleet at the outset, instead of employing Capt. Loper to charter them, it would have saved an immense sum of money.

Mr. William M. Baird, the Treasurer of the Philadelphia Steam Propeller Company, of which Capt. Loper is President, testifies that the Company divided a dividend of 50 per cent last year, their capital being $300,000, and thinks that a surplus was received from its earnings equal to 25 per cent more. But he knows nothing in reality about the surplus, because, although he is Treasurer, he has nothing to do with the funds. The Directors of the Company have great confidence in Capt. Loper, and their confidence apparently is not misplaced. Having devolved the duties of Treasurer, as well as President and General Manager, upon him, by which means they are enabled to plead ignorance to questions regarding their financial resources, Capt. Loper suddenly increases their dividends from 10 per cent to 50 per cent per annum, and saves a large surplus in addition. Mr. Baird, the Treasurer, has a vague idea that the usual dividends of the Company are from 10 to 25 per cent per annum, but he cannot specify any particular year when they were more than 10 per cent prior to the breaking out of the Rebellion. While Mr. Loper was acting as "Assistant Agent of the War Department," under the appointment of J. Edgar Thompson, he put the following steamers, belonging to the Philadelphia Steam Propeller Company, and the Express Steamboat Company, which are practically one and the same concern, into charter to the Government at the following rates respectively:

1861.	Name.	Tonnage.	Rate Per Day.
April 20	Josephine	294	$150
April 22	Philadelphia	172	135
April 23	Thomas Sparks	300	175
April 27	Oneida (barge)	133	50
April 27	New-York	159	125
April 27	Middlesex (barge)	124	50
April 27	Pionet	382	150
April 27	Ann Ellis	211	125
May 7	Sophia	208	150
Total		1,920	$1,090

Nine vessels—aggregate tonnage, 1,990—at $1,090 per day.

The above list is derived from the letter of the Secretary of War, dated March 26, 1862, in answer to the resolution of the Senate of January 30, 1862. (Senate Ex. Doc. No. 37, XXXVIth Congress, 2d Session.) Capt. Loper has himself undertaken to furnish a list, under oath, of the charters which he effected during the same period of time.

There are discrepancies between the two lists which the Committee will not attempt to explain. The steamers Josephine, Thomas Sparks, Pionet, Ann Ellis, and Sophia, which appear in the report of the Secretary of War as having been chartered by Capt. Loper, during the period of his agency, namely, between April 20 and May 8, 1861, do not appear in Capt. Loper's list at all. These steamers were owned in part by Capt. Loper as stockholder in the two companies.

Being President, Treasurer, Business Manager and Stockholder of the Company, and "Assistant Agent of the War Department," Capt. Loper had extraordinary facilities for making the charters to suit himself. It rarely happens in the ordinary avocations of life that a person enjoys the privilege of buying his own property for another person, and fixing his own price upon it, or of buying other people's property, for a third person, and regulating his own compensation by the amount of money he squanders; yet such seems to have been the manner in which the Government has been served, not only in Capt. Loper's agency, but in nearly all the business connected with the transportation by water of troops, supplies and munitions of war during the past eighteen months.

Capt. Loper's assistant agency lasted only till May 8, 1861, at which time his commission was revoked by Mr. J. Edgar Thompson, who informed Capt. Loper that he had been notified by the Secretary of War (Mr. Cameron) of the appointment of Mr. John Tucker as "United States Transport Agent." Mr. Thompson then wrote a letter to the Secretary of War, stating that Capt. Loper had been "untiring in his efforts to serve the country. The more heavy operations of Capt. Loper begin with the appointment of Mr. Tucker as "United States Transport Agent," and they have continued without intermission during the whole of Mr. Tucker's two terms of office, first as Agent, and subsequently as Assistant Secretary of War. Mr. Tucker employed Capt. Loper to "inspect and recommend" all kinds of vessels at Philadelphia, New-York, and Annapolis, for various services and expeditions, and Capt. Loper proceeded to charge from five to ten per cent commissions on the gross earnings of the vessels recommended to Mr. Tucker for charter. In some cases it was denominated a brokerage commission; in others, a commission for collecting; and in others still, he received five per cent for brokerage and five per cent additional for collecting the sums due to the owners. The testimony of William Wendell shows that Loper took $5,000 from him on the earnings of the steamers Pilot Boy and George Washington, being ten per cent on the proceeds of their charter parties. Capt. Loper admits that he took $5,000 from Mr. Anthony Groves on certain vessels, and Mr. Groves testified that in making the charter he estimated for the commissions he should be obliged to pay Loper, so that it really came out of the Government.

The time allotted for this investigation did not permit the Committee to pursue their discoveries by examining all or any considerable number of the persons who paid Loper five per cent or other commissions. Capt. Loper has furnished the Committee a list of steamers recommended for charter for the use of the expedition under command of Major-Gen. McClellan, U. S. A.* The number of steamers in this list is 31, and Capt. Loper affirms that he received no commissions on any of them. Being interrogated whether the list embraces all the steamers recommended by him for the McClellan Expedition, he is unable to reply. Mr. Hall testifies that he paid Capt. Loper $13,000 for "getting business" for him in the McClellan Expedition, and Capt. Loper admits that he received the money. Therefore, the above-mentioned list has no significance, except as showing on Capt. Loper's oath that he did recommend certain steamers for the McClellan Expedition without getting a commission on them. He has also furnished a "list of vessels chartered at Annapolis, Maryland, for the Burnside Expedition," and for which no commissions were charged. At the bottom of this list the phraseology is changed so as to read as follows: "All the within and above named vessels were recommended by me to the Hon. John Tucker, and for which no commissions were charged by me." The distinction will be apparent when it is understood that Hall was at Annapolis plying his vocation, charging ½ per cent commissions, and that he considers himself under obligations to pay Loper one half of all his gains. A dramatic performance of much merit was enacted on this occasion. Capt. Loper testifies that he sent a soldier around with a musket, to warn all captains that if they had anything to do with brokers and middlemen, he would not touch their vessels, but would send to New-York and Baltimore for others. But he testifies that he saw Hall then, that he chartered some vessels of him, and that he did not send the soldier to notify Hall of his approach. Loper testified that he has known Hall since the year 1844, that is 17 years. Hall says he has known Loper 19 years.

Capt. Loper's list of vessels chartered for the Burnside Expedition, is singularly faulty. After certifying that "all the within and above-mentioned vessels were recommended by me to the Hon. John Tucker," he testifies that the champion, one of the number, was chartered at Baltimore, and that he had nothing to do with her; and that the Louisiana, another of the list, was chartered by Mr. Brent, directly to Gen. Burnside, without being examined by himself. In his list, he says the Louisiana was chartered by John Tucker, and the report of the Secretary of War, previously referred to (Senate Ex. Doc. 37, page 2, XXXVIth Congress, 2d Session), says that she was chartered by Mr. Tucker. The Committee regret that their time has not permitted an investigation into the facts connected with the charter of the Louisiana, which was taken into the Government service on the 23d of January, 1862, at the enormous rate of $300 per day, and is still in the service. Col. Belger testifies that she was chartered by Tucker, and that he (Belger) has paid, by order of the Quartermaster-General, at different times, $[illegible], for her services for 11 days. But she has been in the service over a year, and there must be still a sum due her greater than her entire value. A singular fact connected with Capt. Loper's extensive business is that he keeps no account books. He puts all his money, from all sources, into bank, and has no other record than his bank-book, consequently he is unable to say what amounts he received from particular individuals. He says he received "ten or twelve thousand dollars" from Hall. Hall says it was $13,000. Loper says he received from $3,000 to $6,000 from Groves. It might have been either. This free and easy system of keeping accounts, taken in connection with the contradictory testimony of witnesses to the same facts, the contradictory testimony of Capt. Loper to the same facts, the contradictions between Capt. Loper's testimony and the official records of the War Department, and the multiplied business relations of Capt. Loper with the Government render it impossible for the Committee to state the amount he has fraudulently received from the Government. They would refer in concluding this branch of their report, to the two lists of vessels now in the service of the Government, owned in part by Capt. Loper, or on whose charters he is now receiving a commission. The former list (vessels owned in part by Capt. Loper now in the Government service) embraces 26 steamers, under charter at rates ranging from $100 to $700 per day, each. Fifteen of the steamers on this list have no charter rates mentioned in the column intended to exhibit them. The proper figures for twelve of these were subsequently obtained from Capt. Loper by interrogatories, so that the Committee are enabled to supply the omission, as follows: Steamers A. Burton, $120; Black Diamond, $100; Ironsides, $100; Ann Ellis, $150; Anda, $125; Seventy, $100; New-York, $600; J. Brooks, $700; Diamond State, $200; Charles Osgood, $250; Quinnebaug, $250; Shetucket, $250 per day. The other ten vessels for which Capt. Loper is acting as Agent or "Ship Husband," and collecting the money due on their charter parties, embraces eleven steamers at rates ranging from $40 to $600 per day, each, and four (4) steamers at rates between $[illegible] and $[illegible] per month.

As to the remarkable discrepancies noted above between the list of vessels presented to the Committee by Capt. Loper as a correct list of charters effected by him while acting as Assistant Agent of the War Department, and the list furnished in the letter of the Secretary of War (Senate Ex. Doc. No. 37), the real truth can be ascertained, and the Committee will leave it to be determined by other tribunals.

STEAMER METAMORA.

Another extraordinary condition of facts is developed in connection with this steamer. She was an old vessel, and cost her owners $[illegible]. She was chartered upon the recommendation of Capt. B. F. Loper, by Assistant Secretary of War John Tucker, though the latter gentleman has failed, for some unexplained reason, to include her name in the list he furnished to the Committee, of vessels chartered by him or under his direction. The price paid for her by the Government was $400 per day, according to the testimony of Mr. Lewis Baker, one of her owners. She was chartered to be delivered at Annapolis on the 6th of March, 1862. I state from memory. A telegram came on from one of the owners in New-York to deliver her there on the 6th of March, with 4,000 gallons of water on board. We got ready to run the blockade, and were stopped here on the night of the 6th by the Quartermaster's Department at 4 or 5 o'clock in the afternoon. That is the time she was chartered. * * *

Question—When did your pay for the Metamora actually commence?

Answer—We got paid from the first of the month.

Question—Why were you paid for that six days prior?

Answer—That is more than I can state; we were paid for her. * * * * * * *

Question—Do you know of her having made a pleasure excursion?

Answer—Yes, Sir; we made an excursion on the 1st and on the 2d of March down to a Rebel battery opposite Mattawoman Creek, called Cockpit-Point Battery.

Question—Was that on private account?

Answer—Yes, Sir; it was our own boat; we knew nothing about the Government then; that was on the 1st and 2d of March. * * * * * * *

Question—Those were two of the days for which you were paid by the Government?

Answer—Yes, Sir; we were paid from the 1st of the month.

The evidence shows that the Metamora was not only paid for at least four days services that she did not render, amounting to $1,600, but she was repaired at the expense of the Government to the amount of $4,447 02, and that during the time she was undergoing repairs, sold by Baker to be fourteen days, she received her charter-party pay $401 per day. A part of these repairs consisted of bunkers in which the private trading stores of some of her owners who were army sutlers were carried; for it is shown that this vessel was used for private purposes, and that some of the owners realized upon one trip of the vessel to Harrison's Landing the handsome profit of $3,100. It is stated by one of the owners, Mr. John Packer, and also by Mr. John Tucker, who directed this large amount of repairs to be done to the Metamora (see his letter to Col. Belger), that they were paid by the Government in consequence of damage done to her by the performance of extraordinary work in the early part of May, 1862, when she was required to cross in boistrous weather from Fortress Monroe to Cherrystone Inlet. By reference to Major Belger's account of repairs done to her, it will be observed that the items are:

May 29....Repairing Awnings, &c.	$22 25
May 30....Joiner's work, &c., and materials	261 10
May 31....Painting, &c., and materials	261 82
May 31....Pattern Maker's work, &c.	1,142 04
Aug. 27....Carpenter's work, &c.	2,023 41

It would be curious to know how the stranding of this steamer in heavy weather rendered necessary the application of $261 82 of paint, or $1,142 04 of pattern-makers' work; nor is it easy to understand the connection between the strain to which she was exposed in May and the $2,023 41 of carpenters' work expended upon her in August.

Another ship broker appears on the stage in connection with this vessel. This person is John B. Danforth of New-York City. He seems to have a very shadowy existence, very few people in New-York knowing either the man, his habitation, or his business. The Committee cannot discover that before this war he has had any connection with the shipping business, though it would appear that he has received, if he is not now receiving, commissions upon the steamers Brooks and Kent.

The services rendered by Danforth to the owners of the Metamora, according to Baker, were: "Getting the boat employed, or rather it was taking care of her, keeping her in the Government employ; she had something like $6,000 or $7,000 worth of repairs put on her at Baltimore, and it was for favor shown to the boat; that is what they (the other owners) told me."

What influence Mr. Danforth may really have exerted upon Capt. Loper who recommended, or upon Mr. Tucker who chartered the Metamora, and afterward directed her to be repaired at the Government expense, the Committee are left to conjecture, but it is shown by the testimony of both Baker and Acker that the owners, who must be presumed to be the best judges of the value of his services in this regard, paid him $6,100 for them. Danforth demanded of the owners $5,000. Some of them were willing to pay that amount and some objected, all agreeing, however, that something was due to him, till at length the amount before named was settled upon as a compromise. The testimony abundantly shows that the Metamora was chartered at an exorbitant rate, as would seem to be the case with all the vessels with which Danforth was in any way connected, or of which Capt. Powers, of Hudson, New-York, was part owner or agent.

THE STEAMER GEORGE WASHINGTON, ALIAS CONSTITUTION.

The Committee call attention to the testimony of Cornelius Wendill and the letter of Gen. M. C. Meigs, U. S. A., in relation to the case of this steamer. The transactions in connection with her demand minute investigation by the War Department.

COL. JAMES BELGER, Q. M.

Col. James Belger is the Quartermaster at Baltimore. Mr. Hall shows in the list rendered to the War Department, that he has "chartered for Col. James Belger," between April 15 and Sept. 6, 1862, 53 schooners, 33 barges, 2 brigs, one sloop and one bark—in all, 110 vessels. It has been shown by the testimony of Appegarth and Rhoads that Belger knew all about Hall's five per cent commissions, as early as January or February, 1862, at least one month before any of these charters named of cited; Appegarth tried to charter his vessels directly to Belger, saying that the five per cent could thus be saved to the Government, but Belger told him he must go to Hall. Rhoads tried to charter directly to Belger, and he, too, was driven to Hall. The Committee are not informed whether Col. Belger first became acquainted with Hall through Mr. John Tucker or otherwise. Tucker directed Belger, by a letter dated Baltimore, April 19, 1862, printed in connection with the letter's testimony, to "do the needful" in respect of a large number of Hall's charters for vessels to transport engines and cars, by which it is obvious he meant to direct him to sign the charter-parties on behalf of the Government. Col. Belger so understood it, and acted accordingly. It would seem that this order of Tucker's was intended to cover the list of vessels, 73 in number, furnished to the Committee by Hall, under the caption, "List of vessels chartered to transport locomotives, cars, railroad iron, &c.," and did not apply to the 110 vessels chartered by Hall for Belger. Practically it is of no consequence whether Hall and Belger were brought together by Tucker or not. Belger admits that he knew Hall was receiving five per cent commissions on his charters. He knew that Hall was fixing his own compensation on all the charters he effected for the Government. Yet he employed him to charter 110 vessels (according to Hall's list), and allowed him in this way to defraud the Government of at least $[illegible], for Hall says that was the amount of commissions he received on the vessels "chartered for Col. Belger." The following quotation from Col. Belger's testimony is to the point:

Question—Then your charters which were made independent of Mr. Tucker were also made through Mr. Hall, as well as those made under the direction of Mr. Tucker?

Answer—Yes, Sir. I don't know anything about Mr. Tucker; but whenever I wanted a vessel of Mr. Hall, I would say to him: "I want such a vessel and I don't want to go into the market for it; you go and pick me out such a vessel, and charter it at the lowest rate."

Several witnesses testify that it was generally understood among ship owners in Baltimore that no charters could be effected at Col. Belger's office except through Hall; and Andrew Gray testifies that the orders issued by Col. Belger to the vessels that after they were chartered frequently came through Hall. Col. Belger furnished the Committee a report of vessels chartered and employed by himself, a Quartermaster of the United States Army at Baltimore, Md., from April 27, 1861, to Jan. 13, 1863. Gen. M. C. Meigs, Quartermaster-General U. S. A., also furnished