

THE GREAT NAVAL CONFLICT.

The Desperate Struggle of the Iron-Clad Gunboats.

Triumph of the Ericsson Battery Monitor.

Additional Particulars of the Fights of Friday and Saturday from Our Own Correspondents.

Statement of the Pilot of the Cumberland.

The Sloop-of-War Went Down with Her Colors Flying.

TWO HUNDRED LIVES PROBABLY LOST.

Captain Smith, of the Congress, Chaplain Lenhart and Master's Mate Harrington, of the Cumberland, Killed.

OFFICIAL REPORT OF FLAG OFFICER MARSTON

Skill and Bravery of the Officers and Men of the Monitor.

THRILLING SCENES AND INCIDENTS

The Injuries of Lieutenant Worden, of the Monitor.

Outside Appearance of the Monitor and Merrimac.

All Honor to Ericsson, Stimers, and the Monitor.

SKETCHES OF THEIR SERVICES.

THE DETAILS OF THE AFFAIR.

What Our Own Correspondent Saw of the Terrible Naval Conflict.

OUR FORTRESS MONROE CORRESPONDENCE.

THE PEACE AND TRANQUILITY WHICH ORDINARILY reign at this point have been broken in the twenty-four hours ending at twelve o'clock to-day, by the terrific naval engagements, both yesterday and to-day.

THE REBEL IRON-CLAD STEAMER MERRIMAC, about which so much has been written, and by many thought to be a failure as a war machine, has proved not only a success, but one of the most formidable naval engines of destruction, as the events of the last twenty-four hours have shown.

THE ADVANCE OF THE MERRIMAC ON HER HOSTILE MISSION, about which the world has not been so much interested as to the naval engagements of yesterday and to-day, and which will be several days yet before full particulars of the loss to life and property can be fully ascertained.

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dimensions, as she made the turn described, she looked terribly saucy. She was closely followed by two or three smaller vessels, but of sufficient size and appearance to make them seem prepared for mischief. The Merrimac and her consort were closely followed by the Union vessels.

The Union fleet, consisting of the vessels already named, after reaching a point several miles from the fort, struck the same channel in which the rebel fleet had already preceded them. When the rebel fleet were within a mile or two from Newport's News they opened fire on the United States sailing frigates Congress and Cumberland, which were blockading off the point. The rebel vessels then ran up their colors—a black flag for the Merrimac and the rebel ensign at her peak. The Union vessels, seeing the rebels approaching, beat to quarters, and every gun was shot for action. The rebel battery Merrimac opened the engagement by directing its attention to the frigate Cumberland. At this juncture, it being about half-past two o'clock, two other rebel steamers, which subsequently proved to be the Patrick Henry and Yorktown, came steaming up the James river, from the direction of Richmond. They soon joined the fleet from Norfolk, and both fleets became hotly engaged, the air reverberating with the booming of cannon and the hissing and bursting of shells. The Merrimac, with her formidable armament, was more bold than her competitors, who kept at long range distance. She first directed her attention to the frigate Cumberland, which was anchored about half a mile from and under the Union water battery at Newport's News. The Merrimac steamed boldly up to the Cumberland until within an eighty of a mile, when she turned her side to the Cumberland, firing a broadside of five heavy guns, every shot taking effect. The Cumberland, meanwhile, was not idle, but gave broadside for broadside with her antagonist several times. No perceptible impression was made on the Merrimac, the balls from the Cumberland glancing off as if they were India rubber. The Union water battery at Newport's News, consisting of heavy columbiads, assisted the Cumberland against her formidable antagonist, but with no better result than before mentioned. The Merrimac after a while approached within fifteen or twenty yards of the Cumberland, and fired another broadside, completely riddling the Cumberland, and killing and wounding over fifty or sixty men. She then backed off several hundred yards, and pointed her bow for the Cumberland, and, under full head of steam, ran directly into the side of the Cumberland, driving the immense ram, twelve or fifteen feet long, into the side of the Cumberland below the water mark, perforating the latter vessel and crushing the planks and timbers with apparent ease. The Merrimac then disengaged herself, backed off a sufficient distance, and then repeated a similar operation, but in the waist of the Cumberland. The shot from the columbiads were terrible, the merrimac was so much damaged that she was obliged to leave the Cumberland to the water. The crew of the Cumberland, or such as had not been put hors d'oeuvre, after having fought nearly two hours with the most determined bravery, seeing that the ship was disabled and sinking, sought such means of safety as were at hand. The boats, such of them as were not destroyed, were quickly filled; others sought to save themselves by swimming, those from the lower deck jumping out of the portholes. The Cumberland commenced sinking soon after the Merrimac had collided with her, and those of the crew that did not attempt to save themselves by the boats or swimming took refuge in the rigging after the hulls had appeared beneath the water. The Union sloop-of-war Whitehead, which was at the wharf at Newport's News at the time, was immediately despatched to rescue these men, by order of Brigadier General Mansfield. Out of two hundred and ninety-one men on board the Cumberland it is reported that one-half were either killed, drowned or wounded.

The Merrimac, after completing the destruction of the Cumberland, turned her attention to the water battery on shore, throwing shell with great rapidity into the Union camp. Some of these missiles went a mile over the camp. One shell exploded in the light artillery stables back of the camp, shivering them to atoms. Fortunately, the horses were absent with their battery. The Merrimac, in engaging the water battery, posted herself under the bluff, and the guns of the battery could not be sufficiently depressed to have any effect on the rebel battery. After shelling the camp about half an hour with little or no effect, and with no considerable list of wounded, the Merrimac then proceeded towards the frigate Congress—which was then engaged the rebel gunboats Patrick Henry and Yorktown—which was anchored a few hundred yards from where the Cumberland was. The first shot fired by the rebel steamer at the Congress struck her in the stern, passing through the cabin, killing Lieut. Joseph Smith, the executive officer of the ship, and three sailors. The two vessels then became hotly engaged, which continued for thirty minutes, when the Congress, being riddled with solid shot and shell, struck her colors, and hoisted the white flag. The Merrimac then turned her attention to the other vessels of her fleet engaged them all at once. After the Congress surrendered, she, a rebel steamer, the Jamestown, came alongside and took all the Union officers prisoners, but allowed the crew to go free, they having no room on board for them.

The frigate Minnesota had early got on shore at a place called the Horse Shoe bar, about two miles from Newport's News. The Merrimac hotly engaged the Minnesota, after destroying the Cumberland and Congress, but on account of the support given by other vessels of the Union fleet, the Merrimac gave her a wide berth. The fight continued, with no particular result except those before mentioned, until long after dark.

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three or four miles from the fort, which is a distance of about fourteen miles from where the Congress went to the bottom.

The day closed, indeed, with sadness in the hearts of our officers, besides having the fact resting on their minds that the hostile machine that had just made such murderous work had only retired apparently to recruit itself, and then return to complete the destruction she had so suspiciously commenced, having the floating vessels here at her mercy. While despondency settled on many brows, and conjectures were rife as to where the Merrimac would direct her attention on the next day, a gleam of hope arose. At eight o'clock in the evening a bright, movable light was discovered seaward coming from the direction of Cape Charles light. It being known that the Ericsson Battery had left New York a few days previous, surmises were rife that this light might proceed from the deck. The best night telescopes were brought into requisition, and in less than half an hour after it first bore in sight the fact was ascertained that the Ericsson Battery was coming up the Roads. The news spread like wildfire; the ramparts in the fort were soon lined with troops. At nine o'clock the Monitor anchored off Fort Monroe. Lieutenant Commanding Worden immediately reported to Flag Officer Marston, and subsequently to General Wool. It was at once determined by the latter to send the Monitor to Newport's News to protect that point, also to defend the Merrimac, which was still on shore. Before she started on her mission an additional supply of ammunition was placed on board, and at half-past eleven o'clock the Monitor went on her mission, to await the appearance of things the following day. The arrival of the Monitor was, indeed, providential.

This day (Sunday) the day broke fair. As the sun broke on the horizon a slight haze was visible on the water, which prevented an extended vision. At half-past six o'clock A. M. this haze cleared away. Looking towards Sewall's Point there appeared the Merrimac and the rebel steamers—Yorktown and Patrick Henry. They were stationary—the Merrimac to the right of the others, blowing off steam. Their appearance was the cause of a second alarm. The rebel craft seemed deliberating what to do—whether to move on to attempt the destruction of the Minnesota, which was yet grounded, or move on to the Union fleet anchored near the Rip Raps. The appearance of the Merrimac on this second visit caused great precipitation in the removal of our transport fleet to a safe harbor a mile or two up the Chesapeake Bay. At seven A. M. a plan seemed to be adopted, and the Merrimac steamed in the direction of the Minnesota, which was still grounded. The Yorktown and Jamestown were crowded with troops, and steamed slowly after the Merrimac. The plan of the latter seemed to be to destroy the Minnesota, and then proceed to shell out the Union camp, and to take possession of the Union camp with their own troops. The Merrimac steamed along with boldness until she was within three miles of the Minnesota, when the Monitor essayed from behind the latter and proceeded towards the Merrimac. At first the rebel craft seemed non-plussed, and hesitated, no doubt in wonderment at the queer looking machine approaching her. The Merrimac then closed the distance between her and the Monitor until they were within a mile of each other. Both batteries stopped. The Merrimac fired a shot at the Minnesota, to which no reply was made. The rebel craft then fired at the Monitor; the latter replied by firing the Merrimac near the water line. The Merrimac then commenced firing very rapidly, first from her stern gun at the Monitor, and then her broadside guns, occasionally firing a shot at the Minnesota. The fight went on in this way for an hour or two, both vessels exchanging shots freely. Sometimes the Merrimac would retire followed by the Ericsson, and vice versa. While the fight between the batteries was going on one hundred solid nine inch shot were sent up from Fort Monroe on the steamer Raccoon to the Minnesota. At a quarter past ten o'clock the Merrimac and Monitor had come into pretty close quarters, the former giving the latter two broadsides in succession. It was promptly replied to by the Monitor. The firing was so rapid that both craft were obscured in a column of white smoke for a moment or more. The ramparts of the fort, the rigging of the vessels in the port, houses and the bend were all crowded with soldiers, sailors and civilians. When the rapid firing alluded to took place, these spectators were singularly silent, as if doubtful as to the result. Their impatience was soon removed by the full figure of the Monitor, with the Stars and Stripes flying at her stern, steaming around the Merrimac, moving with the ease of a duck on the water. The distance between the vessels was forty feet. In this circuit the Monitor's guns were not idle, as she fired shot after shot into her antagonist, two of which, it is alleged, penetrated the Merrimac's sides.

At eleven A. M. the Minnesota opened fire, and assisted the Monitor in engaging the Merrimac. She fired nine inch solid shot with good effect. The Merrimac returned the fire, firing shell, one of which struck and exploded the boiler of the gunboat Dragon, which was alongside the Minnesota, endeavoring to get her off. This unfortunate affair Jos. McDonald, sailor, was seriously scalded. For the next hour the battle raged fiercely between the Merrimac on the one side and the Union vessels, the Monitor, Minnesota and Whitehall, but with no particular result. The Minnesota being the best mark for the Merrimac, the latter fired at her frequently, alternately giving the Monitor a shot. The Merrimac made several attempts to run at full speed past the Monitor to attack and run down the Minnesota. All these attempts were repulsed, and it was, by the Monitor, that the Merrimac was finally sunk. The Monitor she ran her plough or ram with full force against the side of the Monitor; but it only had the effect of careening the latter vessel in the slightest degree. The rebel boats Yorktown and Patrick Henry kept at a safe distance from the Monitor. The former vessel, at the beginning of the fight, had the temerity to come within respectable range of the Monitor. The latter fired one shot at her, entering her pilot house, carrying it away, and, no doubt, killing a number of rebels. She retired out of range.

The fight raged hotly on both sides, the opposing batteries moving round each other with the skill, ease and dexterity of expert pugilists. The Merrimac, though the Monitor did not fight with the dexterity of her antagonist, hence the Monitor had the advantage of taking choice of position. At a quarter before twelve o'clock, Lieutenant Hepburn, the signal officer on the ramparts at Fort Monroe, reported to General Wool that the Monitor had pierced the sides of the Merrimac, and in a few minutes the latter was in full retreat, heading for Sewall's Point, and chased for a few minutes by the Monitor. The Merrimac had evidently suffered to some extent, and it was thought at one time that she was sinking. After she got safely under the guns of the rebel battery at Sewall's Point, she stopped and signalled for help from her consort, who were beating a retreat. Subsequently two tug-boats, or gunboats, went alongside and took her in tow, and proceeded to Norfolk. This ended the engagement.

The Merrimac evidently came out in the morning with the expectation of meeting any obstacle more than on the preceding day, and no doubt the presence of the Monitor, when it struck her view, was sudden and wholly unexpected.

The Monitor was handled with unsurpassed skill, dexterity and coolness, for which all praise should be given her officers. She has come up to the expectations that were formed of her, and has proved herself impregnable to the heaviest shot at close quarters.

Lieutenant Worden, who handled the Monitor so skillfully, is in Washington, in the hands of a surgeon. He was in the pilot house of the Monitor when the Merrimac directed a whole broadside at it, and received his injury from the minute gunment.

The Monitor was driven through the look-pieces by Lieutenant Worden was stunned by the shot after she had expended on her decks and solid shot, struck the tower, yet no perceptible damage had been done to the vessel, nor injury to the crew, with the exception already mentioned. One of the crew of the Monitor was asked how the boys felt during the engagement. He replied, "Oh, first rate, the shot and shell from the Merrimac sounded like hammer blows on our decks."

Capt. Van Brunt and the crew of the Minnesota deserve great praise for their noble conduct in the two days' engagement.

The gunboat Whitehall, Capt. W. Bailein, participated in both engagements, and fired two hundred Parrott thirty-pounders. The Parrot thirty-pounder Parrott guns did great execution on the Jamestown, until a shell from the latter struck the trunk, the cap square of one of the guns making a dent of about one-quarter of an inch; but, singular to relate, not a man was hurt by the bursting of the shell.

The Whitehall is completely riddled. On the doors and bulwarks brains and blood, brains and hair are scattered around. The crew of the Whitehall behaved most admirably, and every shot from the enemy was hailed with a cheer and the fire returned.

Capt. Baber says he cannot speak too high in the praise of the Monitor. He asserts that the Merrimac will never come out again as long as the Monitor is in this harbor.

The following are the officers of the Whitehall—Acting Master—Wm. Baber. Chief Engineer—Thos. S. Hale. Second Engineer—Thos. S. Hale. Chief Engineer—Henry Hyde. Purser—Aaron Upjohn.

On the first day the gunboat Dragon, with her thirty-two-pound Parrott gun for'ard, silenced the rebel steamer Yorktown, compelling the rebels to haul her off in a leaking condition. The following are the officers of the Dragon—Acting Master—Wm. Watson. Chief Engineer—Wm. A. Seward. Third Assistant Engineer—John Jordan. Master's Mate—As. Bowdin. Quartermaster—Ben. Hufferford.

The United States gunboat Zouave (one gun) was in the first of the engagement on Saturday, and continued actively employed against the Merrimac until the latter retreated on Sunday noon. She received three shots from the rebels—one of them carried away her stern post and one of the fans of her propeller. The Zouave in the engagement of Newport's News towed the frigate Congress ashore, in the 70th year of his age.

The friends and relatives of the family are respectfully invited to attend the funeral, this (Tuesday) afternoon, at two o'clock, from the residence of Mr. C. H. Brock, corner of Third street and Hamilton street, South Brooklyn, Cuyahoga Co., Sunday, March 9, Essex corner, wife of Thomas O'Brien.

Her soul mourns with deep regret, For to me she was the best, And her memory I shall never forget; My heart is in heaven rest.

The friends of the family are respectfully invited to attend the funeral, from her late residence, No. 79 Washington street, this (Tuesday) afternoon, at two o'clock. Her remains will be taken to Calvary cemetery for interment.

On Sunday, March 9, GEORGE CLARK, aged 61 years, died at his residence, No. 12 West 37th street, New York, on Wednesday afternoon, at two o'clock, from the residence of her parents, 174 Spring street.

The friends and relatives of the family are respectfully invited to attend the funeral, this (Tuesday) afternoon, at two o'clock, from the residence of Mr. C. H. Brock, corner of Third street and Hamilton street, South Brooklyn, Cuyahoga Co., Sunday, March 9, Essex corner, wife of Thomas O'Brien.

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