Letter from Commodore Tatnall.—The Destruction of the Virginia.

The following is a copy of a letter addressed by Commodore Tatnall to Secretary Mallory:

RICHMOND, VA., May 14, 1862.

SIR:—In detailing to you the circumstances which caused the destruction of the C. S. steamer "Virginia," and her movements a few days previous to that event, I begin with your telegraphic dispatches to me of the 4th and 5th instants, directing me to take such a position in the James river as would entirely prevent the enemy's ascending it.

General Huger, commanding at Norfolk, on learning that I had received this order, called on me and declared that its execution would oblige him to abandon, immediately, his Forts on "Craney Island" and "Sewell's Point" and their guns to the enemy. I informed him, that, as the order was imperative, I must execute it, but suggested that he should telegraph you and state the consequences. He did so, and on the 6th instant, you telegraphed me to endeavor to afford protection to Norfolk as well as the James river, which replaced me in my original position. I then arranged with the General that he should notify me when his preparations for the evacuation of Norfolk were sufficiently advanced to enable me to act independently.

On the 7th instant, Commodore Hollins reached Norfolk with orders from you to consult with me and such officers as I might select in regard to the best disposition to be made of the "Virginia" under the present aspect of things.

We had arranged the Conference for the next day, the 8th, but on that day, before the hour appointed, the enemy attacked the Sewell's Point Battery and I left immediately with the "Virginia" to defend it.

We found six of the enemy's vessels, including the iron clad steamers, "Monitor" and "Naugatuck," shelling the battery. We passed the battery and stood directly for the enemy, for the purpose of engaging him, and I thought an action certain, particularly as the "Minnesota" and "Vanderbilt," which were anchored below Fortress Monroe, got under way and stood up to that point apparently with the intention of joining their squadron in the Roads. Before, however, we got within gun-shot the enemy ceased firing and retired with all speed under the protection of the guns of the Fortress, followed by the "Virginia" until the shells from the "Rip Raps" passed over her.

The "Virginia" was then placed at her moorings near Sewell's Point, and I returned to Norfolk to hold the Conference referred to.

It was held on the 9th, and the officers present were Colonel Anderson and Captain ——, of the Army, selected by General Huger, who was too unwell to attend himself, and, of the Navy, myself, Commodore Hollins, Captains Sterrett and Lee, Commander Richard L. Page and Lieutenants Ap. Catesby Jones, and J. Pembroke Jones.

The opinion was unanimous that the "Virginia" was then employed to the best advantage, and, that she should continue, for the present, to protect Norfolk and thus afford time to remove the public property.

On the next day, at ten o'clock A. M., we observed from the "Virginia" that the flag was not flying on the Sewell's Point Battery, and, that it appeared to have been abandoned. I despatched Lieut. J. P. Jones, the Flag Lieutenant, to Craney Island, where the Confederate flag was still flying, and he there learned that a large force of the enemy had landed on the Bay shore, and were marching rapidly to Norfolk; that the Sewell's Point Battery was abandoned, and our troops were retreating. I then dispatched the same officer to Norfolk, to confer with General Huger and Captain Lee. He found the Navy Yard in flames, and, that all its officers had left by Rail Road. On reaching Norfolk he found that General Huger and all the other officers of the army, had also left, that the enemy were within half a mile of the city, and that the Mayor was treating for its surrender.

On returning to the ship, he found that Craney Island and all the other batteries on the river had been abandoned.

It was now seven o'clock in the evening, and this unexpected information rendered prompt measures necessary for the safety of the "Virginia."

The pilots had assured me that they could take the ship with a draft of eighteen feet, to within forty miles of Richmond.

This, the Chief Pilot, Mr. Parrish, and his Chief Assistant, Mr. Wright, had asserted, again and again; and on the afternoon of the 7th, in my cabin, in the presence of Commodore Hollins and Captain Sterrett, in reply to a question of mine, they both emphatically declared their ability to do so.

Confiding in these assurances, and, after consulting with the First and Flag Lieutenants, and learning that the officers, generally, thought it the most judicious course, I determined to lighten the ship at once, and run up the river for the protection of Richmond.

All hands having been called on deck, I stated to them the condition of things, and my hope that, by getting up the river before the enemy could be made aware of our design we might capture his vessels which had ascended it, and render efficient aid in the defence of Richmond, but that, to effect this, would require all their energy in lightening the ship. They replied with three cheers, and went to work at once.

The pilots were on deck, and heard this address to the crew.

Being quite unwell, I had retired to bed. Between one and two o'clock in the morning, the First Lieutenant reported to me that, after the crew had worked for five or six hours, and lifted the ship, so as to render her unfit for action, the pilots had declared their inability to carry eighteen feet above the Jamestown Flats, up to which point the shore, on each side was occupied by the enemy.

On demanding from the chief pilot, Mr. Parrish, an explanation of this palpable deception, he replied that eighteen feet could not be carried after the prevalence of Easterly winds, and that the wind for the last two days had been Westerly.

I had no time to lose. The ship was not in a condition for battle, even with an enemy of equal force, and their force was overwhelming. I, therefore, determined, with the concurrence of the First and Flag Lieutenants, to save the crew for future service, by landing them at Craney Island, the only road for retreat open to us, and to destroy the ship to prevent her falling into the hands of the enemy. I may add, that although not formally consulted, the course was approved by every commissioned officer in the ship.

There is no dissenting opinion. The ship was accordingly put on shore as near the main-land, in the vicinity of Craney Island, as possible, and the crew landed; she was then fired, and after burning fiercely fore and aft for upwards of an hour, blew up a little before five, on the morning of the 11th.

We marched for Suffolk, twenty-two miles, and reached it in the evening, and from thence came by Railroad to this city.

It will be asked what motives the pilots could have had to deceive me. The only imaginable one is, that they wished to avoid going into battle.

Had the ship not been lifted, so as to render her unfit for action, a desperate contest must have ensued, with a force against us too great to justify much hope of success, and, as battle is not their occupation, they adopted this deceitful course to avoid it. I cannot imagine any other motive, for I had no reason to distrust their good faith to the Confederacy.

My acknowledgments are due to the First Lieutenant, Ap. Catesby Jones, for his untiring exertions, and for the aid he rendered me in all things. The details for firing the ship and landing the crew were left to him, and everything was conducted with the most perfect order.

To the other officers of the ship generally, I am also thankful for the great zeal they displayed throughout.

The Virginia no longer exists, but three hundred brave and skillful officers and seamen are saved to the Confederacy.

I presume that a Court of Inquiry will be ordered to examine into all the circumstances I have narrated, and I earnestly solicit it. Public opinion will never be put right without it.

I am sir, with great respect, your ob't serv't,

JOSIAH TATNALL,
Flag Officer Commanding.

Hon. S. R. MALLORY, Secretary of the Navy.

"NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN."—The many instances in which History has reproduced itself since the commencement of the present revolution, have struck thoughtful men. One of these has called our attention to the following extract from Gov. Swain's "Lecture on the British Invasion of North Carolina in 1776," delivered by Gov. Swain in 1853. Small writing paper sold to our soldiers at their camps at $3 a quire (instead of $3 a ream,) and the small and dingy printing paper now necessarily used, show how little progress the South has made towards commercial independence since 1776:

"We possess copies in a pretty good state of preservation of all the acts of the General Assembly, passed and printed during the revolution. The pamplet containing the enactments of the October session, 1779, consists of 34 pages, 16 small folio, the remainder in quarto. The continued scarcity of paper in 1781 and in 1782, compelled the public printer to adopt a similar arrangement. Even writing paper was not always at the command of men in high official station. In 1776, General Rutherford entreated the council of safety to hasten a supply of powder to Powan, to enable him to march against the Cherokees, and with it a quire of paper, on which he might write his dispatches. In 1782, Gen. Butler of Orange, urges a similar request upon Gov. Burke."—*Fayetteville Observer.*

From the Richmond Enquirer, May 23d, 1862.

The Destruction of the Virginia—A Reply to Commodore Tatnall's Report.

The undersigned, Pilots on board the late noble steamer Virginia, were astonished and amazed to see in the Richmond *Enquirer* of May 19th, the AFTERTHOUGHT communication of Josiah Tatnall, late Flag Officer commanding the steamer Virginia, as it was the FIRST INTIMATION we had that we were to be made the "scapegoats for the sins" of those higher in authority. Humble as we are in station, yet we are free, native born Virginians, and dare to hurl back in the teeth of a Commodore his futile and contradictory missiles, and, if we have the ability, to pour hot shot into his EXPOSED BROADSIDES. To do this, it is necessary to begin at the beginning of his letter to Secretary Mallory. Near the commencement, he says: "I begin with your telegraphic despatches to me of the 4th and 5th instant, directing me to take such a position in the James river as would ENTIRELY prevent the enemy's ascending it."—Farther on he says: "On the 6th you (Secretary Mallory) telegraphed me to endeavor to afford protection to Norfolk as well as the James river, which replaced me in my original position." Why did he not state that his "original position" was in the Elizabeth river, a short distance below Craney Island, which position only protected Norfolk, when, BY LYING IN THE MOUTH OF THE JAMES RIVER, he protected Norfolk and at the same time protected Richmond; because at all tides and at any time, night or day, the ship could be gotten under way, and either intercept the Monitor, if she attempted to go to Norfolk, (of which there was no danger, as she was afraid as death of the Virginia) or get in her rear, and follow her up and capture her. He says: "On the 7th instant, Commodore Hollins reached Norfolk with orders from you (Sec. Mallory) to consult with me, and such officers as I might select, in regard to the best disposition to be made of the Virginia, under the present aspect of things." But on the next day, before the time appointed for conference, the enemy attacked Sewell's Point Battery, and he (the Commodore) left the Navy Yard to attack the Yankee fleet, and in the meantime three of the enemy's vessels had gone up James river, bound for Richmond—one of them being the iron clad steamer Galena that lately attacked Drury's Bluff, below Richmond. But it will be said that Commodore Tatnall had to go to Norfolk with the Virginia to get water, provisions, &c. This we deny, because the Virginia might have been kept in the mouth of the Elizabeth river, or in the mouth of the James river, and water, provisions, coal, yea, all she required, could have been carried down the rivers to her without the slightest difficulty or danger. So the awful blunder of going up to Norfolk, where she could only come out at *high water*, and permitting the enemy to ascend the James river unmolested, cannot be justified or excused by falsely accusing the pilots of deception. The order from the Secretary of the Navy directed that the Virginia should afford protection to the James River, as well as to Norfolk; and this order Commodore Tatnall DISOBEYED by going up to Norfolk and leaving James river ENTIRELY OPEN AND EXPOSED TO THE ENEMY! And even when the Virginia was not at the Navy Yard she lay in the Elizabeth river just below Craney Island, instead of lying in the mouth of the James river, where she protected both Richmond and Norfolk.

We now come to the assertion where Commodore Tattnall says: "The pilots had assured me that they could take the ship, with a draught of eighteen feet, to within forty miles of Richmond." This we deny. We said with *favorable tides* we could take the ship to Westover, about three miles below Harrison's Bar, which is about fifty-three miles from Richmond. But let us see what was the real object in lightening the ship. On the return from Norfolk, where they learned that Gen. Huger had retreated, the batteries been abandoned and the enemy about to take possession of Norfolk, he says: "It was about seven o'clock in the evening, and this unexpected information rendered prompt measures necessary for the *safety of the Virginia.*" Now, if words are to convey ideas, is it not plain that the lightening the ship was not for the purpose of coming up James River to attack the iron-clad steamer Galena and two other formidable gunboats, with the wooden sides, bow, stern and rudder of the Virginia entirely exposed. At first the Commodore says the Virginia was lightened for the safety of the ship; and yet, in the same communication, he says: "I determined to lighten the ship at once, and run up James River for the *protection of Richmond*" Now, was there no panic here? Was there not wanting the spirit, the coolness, and calm decision of our dear and beloved Buchanan? What! the Virginia, that noble specimen of the genius of her constructor—she that was mistress of at least of all of Virginia's waters—required PROMPT MEASURES for her safety! At her very approach the Yankee iron-clad gunboats, and the whole Yankee navy seemed to tremble, and she had only to make her appearance and they ran in a moment.

But let us lift the veil a little higher. The Commodore said he "had retired to bed, and between one and two o'clock the First Lieutenant reported to me that after the ship had been lifted so as to render her unfit for action the pilots had declared their inability to carry eighteen feet above Jamestown flats." Now here is an admission that she was unfit for action; and yet this Commodore says he intended to take her up James river to contend with the "iron clad Galena and two gunboats" that had ascended James river, while he was protecting Richmond by *lying at Norfolk.*

Now we desire to state a fact, and we defy contradiction: that after the Virginia was lightened so as to render her "*unfit for action,*" having thrown over all her ballast and much of her coal, she drew aft *twenty feet* six inches, *and twenty feet forward.* This was ascertained by chief pilot Parish's going in a boat and ascertaining her exact draft. And here we wish to state another fact, exposing the ignorance of this Commander of the draft of his ship—so plainly that even he that "runs may read." When the Virginia was FIRST floated from the Dry Dock at Gosport Navy Yard, she drew EIGHTEEN FEET FOUR INCHES AFT, and seventeen feet forward, with fifty tons of coal, ten tanks of water forward, and her boilers filled. She had no guns on, no shell, no ballast, and has since had put upon her upwards of 200 tons of iron. Thus she drew two feet six inches more than we had ever said she could carry to within 40 miles of Richmond, (even admitting what he says, though we deny its correctness.) Now, is it not plain, that the fact of the Virginia's having had added to her weight more than 200 tons of iron, besides her guns, shot, and shell, and stores, since she first came out of Dock, when she drew 18 feet 4 inches, had escaped the memory of the Commander, or he was ignorant of what he ought to have known? He says: "After the ship was rendered unfit for action, he was informed by the First Lieutenant the pilots had declared their inability to carry 18 feet above the Jamestown Flats." What the pilots did say was, that they desired, if possible, the ship should be lightened to less than 18 feet, as the wind has been several days to the westward, which makes the tides much lower. But at the same time we said we were ready and willing to obey the commands of the Commander. One of us remarked, we were not afraid; when a Lieut. replied, "No, we know that; for you have been tried and have proven yourselves men of courage." The fact is, the ship could not be lightened to draw 18 feet water, unless the guns, ammunition, provisions, and nearly her entire supply of fuel had been thrown overboard, which would have placed her at the mercy of the enemy, and Commodore Tatnall ought to have known it before he attempted to lighten her.

The Commodore says we heard his address to the crew. But at the same time we were not consulted as to the tides, wind, or depth of water that could be carried at that time. He says: "On demanding from the Chief Pilot, Mr. Parrish, an explanation of the palpable deception, he replied that 18 feet would be carried after the prevalence of easterly winds, and that the wind for the last two days had been westerly.'" This statement Pilot Parrish utterly denies, and says no such demand of an explanation of "this palpable deception" was made. No man charged him with it. So far from it, not one word of censure or complaint was uttered during the whole time. In fact, we all felt grateful for the kind treatment we had received, and the Commodore in particular acted generously and kind. So much so that on our way to Suffolk, he took one of us (Pilot Parish) up in the cart with him and gave him a good drink out of his tickler; and moreover, when we arrived in Richmond he endorsed all our bills for pay. Now we did not desire this treatment. If we had acted with PALPABLE DECEPTION, why were we not charged with this deception on board the ship and at the time the first Lieutenant informed him, the pilots said 18 feet water could not be carried over the Jamestown Flats?

"It will be asked (he says) what motives the pilots would have had to deceive me. The only imaginable one is, that they wished to avoid going into battle—Had the ship not been lifted so as to render her unfit for action, a desperate contest must have ensued with a force against us too great to justify much hope of success, and as battle is not their occupation, they adopted this deceitful course to avoid it; for I had seen no reason to doubt their good faith to the Confederacy."

One would suppose from the foregoing paragraph that the PILOTS ordered the Virginia to be lightened, to prevent her going into action; for the Commodore says "if she had not been lightened a desperate contest must have ensued against a force too great to justify much hope of success." It was the Commodore that knew of the great force he had to contend with, and *he* had the ship lightened. But he says it was fear that prompted us to deceive, and that as BATTLE IS NOT OUR OCCUPATION, WE ADOPTED THIS DECEITFUL COURSE TO AVOID IT. It is true, our occupation sends us on the tempestuous ocean in sunshine and in storm, and we do not tread the decks of men-of-war Commodores; but we encounter some danger, at least, in bringing in the weather-beaten mariner to a haven of safety. We have never served our country in times of PEACE on DEAD SAM'S deck, but we were present with the brave BUCHANAN, Jones and other officers and crew when they sank the Cumberland and destroyed the Congress.

We have stood exposed to the enemy's fire on the uncalled for destroyed Virginia, when minnie balls and cannon balls fell thick as hail. One of us (First Pilot Parrish) was on board the Harmony, commanded by the brave Capt. Fairfax, when he fought the Savannah off Newport News. He was also on board the Sea Bird, under the brave veteran Commodore Lynch, when he took the Sherwood from the Express, and was under fire of the enemy for two hours. From the first day the Virginia flung to the breeze the flag of our beloved Southern Confederacy, we have acted as her Pilots; and if we have shown cowardice or an unwillingness to obey orders, or incompetency, let Buchanan, Jones and others say so.

Now a few words as to the management of the ship: On the memorable battle of the 8th and 9th of March, when the wonder of the world (the Virginia,) under command of Buchanan and Jones, gallantly encountered the Cumberland, the Congress, the Minnesota, the Monitor, the St. Lawrence and several gunboats, a crowd of twenty thousand persons, with many naval officers, united in one voice in saying that the Virginia is "splendidly managed." One of us (Pilot Geo. Wright) piloted the French ship Gassendia from Norfolk, with the French Minister on board, and had the high gratification of hearing from the lips of the French Commander, the compliment "that on the battle of the 8th and 9th, the Virginia was handled in a masterly and seaman-like manner. "And, sir," he said, "I have a drawing I will show you of the battle, and the victory."—Pilot Wright remarked, "sir, it is very correct." Thus it will be seen that, so far from fault being expressed, nothing but commendation was bestowed upon us until we reached Richmond, when for the first time, we are charged with DECEPTION. Commodore Tatnall says: "I have seen no reason to distrust their good faith to the Confederacy." Sir, we did not require *your* endorsement. We are known by men at least fully your equals; and no man has ever dared to doubt our loyalty to our State and to the South. If we had chosen to be traitors, thousands and tens of thousands might have been at our command, if we could have been bribed to pilot Union ships instead of Southern ships. Though poor, and three of us men of large families, dependent on us for subsistence, there is not Yankee gold enough in all the land to induce us to betray the Southern Confederacy. No Virginia pilot has disobeyed the proclamation of our Governor, prohibiting them from piloting Yankee men-of-war or merchant vessels.

We have nearly concluded this communication, and though a more thorough and elaborate answer would have exposed the fallacy and inconsistency of Commodore Tatnall's communication, yet we hope enough has been said to open the eyes of the authorities and the public.

Before closing, it is proper to notice the unjust and unmerited treatment manifested towards Chief Pilot Parrish. Since the Virginia was launched, Pilot Parish has been with her in good and evil report. He received a commission as Master in the Navy, signed by President Davis, and has endeavored to do his duty to his State and country.

On his arrival in Richmond he was ordered to the batteries of Drury's Bluff. He immediately repaired to that post, and commenced with all his powers to aid in blockading the James river, which had been exposed to Yankee gunboats, by the withdrawal of the Virginia from the defences of the James River.

While thus engaged, Pilot Parish received from Secretary Mallory an order revoking his commission and dismissing him from the service without affording him the form of a trial, and without even a notice of a charge. Pilot Parish would rather have fallen in defence of his country, leaving a good name to his wife and children, than thus, without a hearing to be deprived of that to which he is justly entitled. But conscious that a full investigation of the whole matter will fully exhonorate the Pilots from all blame in relation to the destruction of the Virginia. Pilot Parish will content himself meanwhile with the consciousness that he has done his duty; as have also the Pilots associated with him on board the Virginia."

In conclusion we say that, in the destruction of the "Pride of the South," the Pilots on board had no part or lot; and no fault or blame can be attached to us.

WM. PARRISH,
GEO. WRIGHT,
WM. T. C. CLARK,
H. WILIAMS, } Pilots.

Gen. Heth's Command.

A rumor was current in the city last night, that Gen. Heth had been defeated. All the information that we could gather on the subject was that General Heth designed giving battle to the enemy, but learning that he had been largely reinforced, deemed it prudent to retire, which he did in good order, burning the Greenbrier river bridge behind him. We also learn that there had been some skirmishing between the forces, in which Capt. Gaston Otey, of this city, was severely though not seriously wounded.

Richmond Enquirer, 27th.

COMMERCIAL.

WILMINGTON MARKETS, MAY 28.

BEEF CATTLE—Are wanted, and sell on the hoof at 10 to 12½ cents per lb.

BEESWAX—20 cents per lb.

BACON—Supply light, and demand fair. We quote at 27 to 28 cents for hog round, and 28 to 30 cents per lb for hams.

BUTTER—is scarce, and sells at 65 to 75 cents per lb., as in quality.

COFFEE—Cuba 65 to 70 cents per lb. by the bag.

CANDLES—Tallow, sell at 35 cents per lb.

CORN MEAL—Sells at $1 25 per bushel, in lots to suit.

EGGS—25 cents per dozen.

FLOUR—Is in small stock, but the market rules dull. We quote small sales from store at $11 50 for superfine, and $12 per bbl. for family.

LARD—25 to 26 cents per bbl.

MOLASSES—New Orleans is scarce, and sells by the bbl. at $2 per gallon.

OSNABURGS—27 to 30 cents per yard.

PEAS—Cow sell at $1 10 to $1 15 per bushel.

PEA NUTS—Arrive sparingly, and sell at $1 60 to $1 65 per bushel.

RICE—Clean sells at 4 to 4¼ cents per lb.

SUGAR—Is scarce and high. New Orleans sells at 27 to 30 cents per lb. by the bbl., as in quality.

SALT—Is in orisk demand, and is purchased as fast as can be made. We quote at $10 per bushel, in lots to suit.

SHEETING—Scarce and wanted. We quote 26 to 28 cents per yard.

YARN—Is also scarce and in demand. Sells at 45 to 50 cents per lb. for Nos. 6 to 10.

TALLOW—20 to 22 cents per lb.

3200 LBS. OF SOLE LEATHER, at WILSON'S.
POWDER, Shot and Caps, at WILSON'S.
ALL KINDS OF RIDING SADDLES, at WILSON'S.
ALL KINDS OF HARNESS, at WILSON'S.
WHIPS, BITS AND SPURS, at WILSON'S.
ALL KINDS OF BRIDLES AND MARTINGALES, at WILSON'S.
SHOT AND LEAD, at WILSON'S.
1000 GROSS OF BUCKLES, at WILSON'S.
CANTEENS, HAVERSACKS AND KNAPSACKS, at WILSON'S.
SHOE NAILS, Pegs and Thread, at WILSON'S.
ALL KINDS OF MILITARY TRAPPINGS, at JAMES WILSON'S,
Oil. Leather, Saddlery, Trunk and Harness Establishment,
May 28th, 1862—3d&w. No. 5 Market Street.

WANTED.
IN GOOD SAILING ORDER, a well built vessel of the capacity of about 500 barrels. Address JAMES WILSON,
May 12th, 1862—d&w Wilmington, N. C.

YOKE SEAM SHIRTS.
A FEW LEFT, at
May 26. BALDWIN'S.

DOESKIN AND CLOTHS, at
May 26. BALDWIN'S.

OLIVE, BROWN, and other Fancy Cloths, at
May 26. BALDWIN'S.

GUANO.
NOW is the time to manure your land. SOMBREO and MANIPULATED GUANO for sale in lots to suit by KIDDER & MARTIN.
March 22, 1862.—165&31-$10

MILITARY WORKS.
ARMY REGULATIONS, Revised Edition.
Cooper's Cavalry Tactics.
Volunteer's Camp and Field Book.
The Volunteer's Hand Book.
Notes on Artillery, by Levy Brown, M. A.
Instructions for Field Artillery, at
May 23d, 1862. KELLEY'S BOOK STORE.

HEAVY ORDNANCE
AND ARMY REGULATIONS. A full supply at
KELLEY'S Book Store.
May 27th

The Battle of Newbern—Official Report of Gen. Branch.

From the State Journal.

HEADQUARTERS 1ST DIVISION,
In the Field, March 26th, 1862.

General: My report of the battle of the 14th, below Newbern, has been withheld until I could get a report from Col R. P. Campbell, who commanded my right wing on that day. It is now submitted with the reports from all the commanders of regiments on the field.

A brief description of the artificial defences of Newbern, together with the enclosed sketch, will enable you to comprehend the movements of the day, which were few and simple.

The defensive works were located and constructed before I assumed command. The troops under my command had performed a large amount of work, but it was mainly on the river defences, which were not assailed by the enemy.—They had originally been planned for a force much larger than any ever placed at my disposal, and I was for six weeks engaged in making the necessary changes to contract them; but the failure of all my efforts to obtain implements and tools, with which the troops could carry on the works, prevented me from making satisfactory progress. I had circulated handbills over the State calling on the citizens generally to assist me, and received from two counties a small party of free negroes, without implements. I then inserted in the newspapers an advertisement calling on the slave owners to hire their slaves, with implements, for a few days, and I got but a single negro. During all this time, I continued the troops at work; and when the enemy came into the river, five hundred per day were being detailed to construct breast-works, with less than half that number of worn and broken shovels and axes, without picks or grubbing hoes. If the fate of Newbern shall prevent a similar supineness on the part of citizens and slave owners elsewhere, it will be fortunate for the country.

For this reason I had been unable to complete the system I had adopted for contracting the works.

Ten miles below Newbern, on the south side of the Neuse, is the mouth of Otter Creek. From the creek, one mile above its mouth, the *Croatan breastworks* runs across an impracticable swamp, about three-fourths of a mile. This is a well-planned and well-constructed work, which two thousand men and two field batteries could hold against a very large force. But from the mouth of Otter Creek to Fort Thompson, the lowest of the river batteries, is a distance of six miles of river shore, on any part of which the enemy could land, and take the Croatan works in reverse.—It is obvious that the breastwork was useless, and I had not sufficient force to hold it, and at the same time guard six miles of river shore. I have at no time been able to place four thousand men in the field at Newbern; and at the time of the battle had been seriously weakened by the re-enlistment furloughs. Coming up the river from the Croatan works, you would reach the Fort Thompson breastwork.—This had been constructed from Fort Thompson to the railroad, about one mile, before I assumed command. Finding that, from inadequate force, the Croatan work might be of no avail to me, I determined to extend the Fort Thompson work about one mile and a fourth, and rest its right on a swamp. This is the work I was engaged on when the enemy appeared. In order to make the line as short as possible, and to avail myself of a small branch, by throwing it in front, the line was thrown back about 150 yards on the railroad, and thence a series of small breastworks, conforming to the features of the ground, ran off in the direction of the swamp, making an obtuse angle with the older portion of the line on the other side of the railroad. To guard this gap, I directed that the old brick-kiln on the railroad should be loophooled, and the evening before the battle I had ordered two twenty four pounder guns to be brought from Newbern and placed in battery there. The enemy's skirmishers drove the laborers from the battery, when an hour would have enable them to get the guns in position. Of course I lost all the benefit I expected from it. The line of small breastworks from the railroad to the swamp was partially finished for about half the distance.

Running parallel to the river, and to each other, and crossing the lines at right angles, are, first, after leaving the river, the old Beaufort road and then the railroad. Still further on, and near the swamp, it is crossed by the Weathersby road. The railroad and the Beaufort road intersect about two miles behind the breastwork—the former crossing the river on a bridge 1,840 feet long, at the town of Newbern—the latter at an indifferent private bridge about one and a half miles above Newbern. Both these bridges are accessible to gunboats, so that when we stood at the Fort Thompson breastwork, fronting the enemy, we had Neuse river on our left, Brice's Creek, an impassable stream, on our right, and the Neuse and Trent in our rear—the only possible mode of escape, in case of a defeat, being across the two bridges I have described, five miles in our rear.

I hope this description, with the aid of the map enclosed, will put you in possession of our situation at the opening of the battle. I omitted to state that the timber had been felled in front of the breastwork for about 350 yards, and the space was swept by ten field pieces, besides three navy thirty-two pounders, discharging grape and canister from the rear face of Fort Thompson. It is useless to describe the river defences on which the larger amount of labor had been bestowed, as the enemy prudently refrained from attacking the batteries in front, and the gunboats did not come within range of their guns, until they had been silenced from the rear.

I now proceed to detail the incidents of the battle. On Wednesday, the 12th, at 4 o'clock, p. m., the approach of the enemy's fleet was reported to me, and at dark I learned that twelve vessels had anchored below the mouth of Otter Creek, and about forty-five were ascending the river in their rear. Orders were issued to Col. Sinclair, 35th regiment to proceed immediately with his regiment to Fisher's landing, which is just above the mouth of Otter creek, and to resist any attempt of the enemy to land there. Col. Avery, 33d regiment and Lieut Col. Haywood, 7th regiment, constituting the reserve, were ordered to proceed across the river, so as to be in position at the intersection of the Beaufort road and the railroad, at day-break in the morning. Col. R. P. Campbell, commanding my right wing, was instructed to guard the river shore, from the mouth of Otter Creek to Fort Thompson, whilst Col. C. C. Lee, who commanded my left wing, was to guard the remainder of the shore, support the river batteries and reinforce Col. Campbell in case he should be hard pressed. Col. Campbell was instructed to establish his headquarters at the intersection of the Beaufort road and the breastwork, and to collect his troops around him by day break. Both commanders were instructed that in case it should be necessary to fall back from the river shore to the breastwork, Col. Campbell should hold that part to the right of the Beaufort road, and Colonel Lee that part to the left of it.

These orders having been dispatched by 9 o'clock, p. m. the night was spent by the troops in getting into position and other preparations for the contest.

Having given all the necessary directions to staff officers, and others, before 3 o'clock, Thursday morning, and seeing all the men and material forwarded from the camps and depots, at Newbern, I proceeded to Col. Campbell's headquarters. On the road I met dispatches from Col. Sinclair and Capt. P. G. Evans, commanding the pickets, informing me that the enemy were landing troops below the mouth of Otter Creek; and Col. Vance was directed to send his troops to Croatan breastwork to occupy it. Railroad trains were on the spot to carry down reinforcements or to draw off Cols. Vance, and Sinclair, and Brem's battery, as the case might require.

Intelligence was soon brought to me that the enemy's gunboats, having driven Col. Sinclair's regiment from Fisher's landing, were rapidly landing troops at that place, and that Col. Campbell, seeing that the Croatan breastwork was turned, had ordered Vance, Sinclair and Brem to fall back to Fort Thompson breastwork.

My force was wholly inadequate to guard the six miles of river shore, between the mouth of Otter creek and Fort Thompson. The result, therefore, was not wholly unexpected. But I had hoped that a line of rifle-pits, I had caused to be made for a mile along the bluffs, at and on both sides of Fisher's landing, would have enabled me to hold the enemy in check and inflict on him serious loss at the first moment of his placing his foot on our soil. I was, therefore, surprised when the position was yielded with the loss of only one killed and two wounded—all three of which casualties occurred in the retreat.

After the abandonment of Fisher's landing to the enemy, the prompt withdrawal of Vance and Brem could alone save them from being cut off, and the enemy then came into possession of my strongest work, without having received a single shot from us.

The Fort Thompson breastwork now became my sole reliance for resisting his advance, and throughout the remainder of the day and night of Thursday, the most active efforts were made to strengthen that unfinished work.—Both officers and men executed my orders with unflinching energy. I was particularly indebted to Maj. Thompson and Capt. Meade, of the Engineers, to whom I assigned the duty of disposing of the artillery in the most advantageous manner. In the afternoon the gunboats shelled the breastwork heavily, from a position they had taken, out of reach of the guns of our batteries. The composure with which all classes of my troops received this attack from an unseen foe, strengthened the confidence I felt in their steadiness under fire. No damage was inflicted on us by their shells: but the accuracy with which they were thrown, over a thick, intervening woodland, convinced me of the necessity of driving traitors and enemies in disguise from all towns and neighborhoods of which we desire to hold military possession.

During the day on Thursday the troops were posted behind the entrenchments, and it was painfully apparent that my force was not sufficient to man them, even with a thin line for the finished portions of them. I was compelled to withdraw Lieut-Col. Haywood, 7th regiment, from the reserve, and place him in the lines.

The regiments were posted as follows, commencing on the left: Lieut. Col. Barber, 37th regiment, and Maj. Gilmer, 27th regiment, between Fort Thompson and the Beaufort county road; Lieut. Col. Haywood, 7th regiment, Colonel Sinclair, 35th, and Col. Clark, militia, between the Beaufort road and the railroad; Col. Vance, 26th regiment, to the right of the railroad. A few unattached companies were placed between the regiments. My headquarters were about 200 yards in the rear of the entrenchment, at the railroad, and the reserve was about 200 yards in my rear. The cavalry regiment about half a mile to the rear. In this order the troops slept on their arms. At 10 o'clock, Thursday night, Col. Lee brought me intelligence that signal rockets had been seen on our extreme right, from which I inferred that the enemy having found the Weathersby road, were in front of that portion of my line. Orders were sent to Col. Vance to extend the regiment, so that its right might rest on the Weathersby road, and in an hour a section of Brem's battery was moving by a circuitous route to a position on that road; and on taking my position on Friday morning, the centre appeared so weak that I despatched my aid decamp to Col. Campbell to say to him that it must be reinforced if possible. At about 7½ o'clock on Friday morning, the fire opened along the line from the railroad to the river.

I soon received a message from Col. Lee that the enemy were attempting to turn our left. This proved to be a feint, as I replied to him that I thought it would. The next incident of the battle was the appearance of the enemy's skirmishers in front of Vance, and consequently on the prolongation of the line held by the militia. It was to drive the enemy from that position that I had directed the 24-pounder battery to be placed there; and supposing it was ready for service, I sent Capt. Rodman with his company to man it; but they found the guns not mounted, and were placed into position to act as infantry. The skirmishers of the enemy, finding themselves on the flank of the militia, fired at them a few shots from their flank files, which caused a portion of them to flee in great disorder.

I instantly ordered Col. Avery to send five companies to dislodge them. He sent them instantly, under Lieut. Col. Hoke; but before Col. Hoke had gotten into position, though he moved with the greatest promptness and celerity, I received a message from Col. Clark, of the militia, informing me that the enemy were in line of battle in great force on his right. I instantly ordered up the remaining five companies of Col. Avery's regiment, and the whole ten opened a terrific fire from their Enfield rifles. The whole militia, however, had now abandoned their position, and the utmost exertions of myself and my staff could not rally them.—Col. Sinclair's regiment very quickly followed the example—retreating in the utmost disorder.

This laid open Haywood's right, and a large portion of the breastwork was left vacant. I had not a man with whom to occupy it, and the enemy soon poured in a column along the railroad and through a portion of the cut down ground in front, and marched up behind the breastworks to attack what remained of Campbell's command.

The brave 7th met them with the bayonet, and drove them headlong over the parapet, inflicting heavy loss upon them as they fled. But soon returned with heavy reinforcements not less than five or six regiments—the 7th was obliged to yield, falling back slowly and in order.

Seeing the enemy behind the breastwork, without a single man to place in the gap through which he was entering—finding the day lost, my next care was to secure the retreat. This was a critical operation, as the enemy, having pierced our centre, had possession of the two shortest roads to the bridges, and besides, could approach them at pleasure with their gunboats.

Having dispatched two couriers to Col. Avery and two to Col. Vance, with orders for them to fall back to the bridges, I moved to the intersection of the Beaufort road, and railroad, to rally the troops and cover the retreat across the bridges. Here I found a train of cars with the 28th regiment, Lieut. Col. Lowe, who had arrived too late to reach the battle field, and formed them to hold the enemy in check until all should pass. Col. Lee was directed to proceed to Newbern and form all the men he could collect, in the upper part of the town. The 7th regiment arriving in two different parties, was directed to the Trent bridge and hold it, whilst I remained with Lieut. Col. Lowe at the intersection, to hold the enemy in check and cover the retreat. Remaining until there were no more stragglers in sight on either road, I directed Col. Lowe to fall back to the Trent bridge, the enemy showing themselves on the road as his rear guard moved off. Proceeding to the Trent bridge, I placed Col. Campbell in command of all the forces there, with instructions to hold the bridge as long as possible for the passage of Avery and Vance, and then move up the Trent road and join me in town, leaving with him, to conduct him, that gallant gentleman and soldier, Captain Peter G. Evans, whom I had not allowed to leave my person for two days, except to bear orders. The railroad bridge was in flames before I left the intersection.

Arriving in town, I found it in flames in many places, and evacuated. Orders written in the street, under the lurid glare of the flames, were dispatched to Col. Campbell to move up the Trent road, and couriers were dispatched in every direction through the town to search for Col. Lee.—At the railroad street I learned that a gunboat had already landed at one of the lower wharves. Going up Railroad street to see if Col. Lee was at the Fairground, I found on reaching the depot that the gunboats were already there, and the enemy in the Fairgrounds. Col. Lee, finding himself in no condition to make resistance, had properly drawn off and proceeded up the Kinston road. Following on, and directing all the officers I could overtake to conduct their men to Tuscarora, the nearest railroad depot, I proceeded to that place; and having made arrangements for the transportation of the troops to Kinston, by railroad, and seeing most of them off, reached that place myself at 11 o'clock on Saturday.

My loss was 64 killed, 101 wounded, and 413 missing. It is supposed that of the missing about 200 are prisoners and the remainder at home.

The enclosed tabular statement will show you on which regiments and companies the loss fell.—[We published the table here alluded to in the *State Journal* of the 22d ult.—Eds.]

The horses of Latham's battery and four pieces of Brem's battery were killed, and we lost in that way ten pieces of field artillery. There were other pieces at the breastwork, but they were condemned guns from Fort Macon, belonging to no company.

The ammunition and ordnance stores at Newbern were saved, and the camp equipage and baggage of the regiments would have been saved, but we had not field transportation with which to haul it to the railroad.

In five days after the battle I had my brigade in camp in advance of Kinston, ready for action and but little demoralized.

I had at an early day placed Col. R. P. Caldwell, 7th regiment, and Col. C. C. Lee, 37th regiment, in command of the two wings of my brigade. All the troops, except the 33rd regiment and the cavalry regiment, which were in reserve, fought under their immediate command. I could have taken on better security against any errors and oversights I might commit, than I did in placing those two trained and experienced officers in immediate command of the troops. I refer to their reports herewith, and the reports of commanders of regiments, for particulars, as to the