OUR CONFEDERATE COLUMN.

Cruise of the Clarence. Tacony--Archer.

READ'S DARING EXPLOITS

How He Carried Terror to the Northern Ports.

LEFT A BLAZING PATH.

Desperate Federal Pursuit of the Little Rover.

CAPTURE OF THE CALEB CUSHING.

Evacuation of Richmond by the Confederates.

THE ORIGIN OF THE FIRES.

Interesting Letters Bearing Upon the Subject—Running the Blockade. Chat with a Southern Naval Officer—Some Exciting Incidents.

(Written for the Dispatch.)

On the 6th day of May, 1863, the American brig, Clarence, bound from Rio de Janeiro to Baltimore, with a cargo of coffee, was captured off the coast of Brazil by the Confederate States steamer Florida, Captain John N. Maffitt, Confederate States navy, commanding. Lieutenant Charles W. Read, Confederate States navy, an officer of the Florida, a young Mississippian, of scarce 23 years, filled with a patriotic devotion to the cause of the Confederacy, immediately proposed to take the Clarence, with a crew of twenty men, and proceed to Hampton Roads, Va., and there cut out a gunboat or steamer, with which it was his intention to go on a raid against the Federal commerce. Captain Maffitt granted his request, gave him a howitzer, with ammunition and equipments, and the necessary small arms for a crew of twenty men, and bade him god-speed. Read was accompanied by Second-Assistant-Engineer E. H. Brown, so that, altogether, he had twenty-one men, besides himself.

He immediately shaped his course for the capes of the Chesapeake bay, drilling his crew, and preparing them for the arduous service which was expected of them. He also kept the men busy making wooden guns, as he sailed northward, to supply in appearance what he lacked in reality.

Off the Winward Islands he chased several weeks, but failed to overhaul them, on account of the inferior sailing qualities of the Clarence. On the 6th of June, in latitude 33 degrees, 39 minutes, north; longitude 71 degrees, 29 minutes, west, he captured and burned the bark Whistling Wind, of Philadelphia, bound to New Orleans, with coal for Rear-Admiral Farragut's squadron. This vessel had been insured by the United States Government for $14,000. On the 7th of June he captured the schooner Alfred H. Partridge, of New York, bound to Matamoras, Mex. As this vessel was loaded with arms and clothing for citizens of Texas, the captain's bond for $5,000 was taken as a guarantee for the delivery of the cargo to loyal citizens of the Confederate States, and she was allowed to proceed on her journey. On the 9th of June the brig Mary Alvina, from Boston to New Orleans, loaded with commissary stores, was captured and burned.

From the prisoners and papers of the Whistling Wind and Mary Alvina Read gained information which convinced him that it would be impossible for him to carry out his original intention, as no vessels were allowed to go into Hampton Roads unless they had supplies for the United States Government; and even then they were closely watched. The vessels lying at the wharf above Fortress Monroe were guarded by a gunboat and sentries on the wharf, whilst just outside of the fort there were two armed boarding steamers, which inspected everything entering the bay, from a dug-out to a frigate. He then determined to cruise along the coast and try to intercept a transport for Fortress Monroe, and with her to carry out his original design.

SUBSTITUTED THE BARK.

On the morning of the 12th of June, in latitude 37 degrees, north; longitude 75 degrees, 30 minutes, west, almost in sight of the capes of the Chesapeake, the bark Tacony, in ballast from Port Royal, S. C., to Philadelphia, and the schooner M. A. Shindler, of Philadelphia, were captured. The latter was burned; but Read, who was as full of expedients and resources as Paul Jones himself, with the quick eye of a seaman, saw at a glance that the Tacony was a better sailer than the Clarence; so he determined to burn the latter and take the bark for his purposes. He immediately set to work to transfer his gun and his small arms to the Tacony, as time was short, and he was almost in the presence of the enemy. Any one familiar with the sea can appreciate the difficulties of such an operation on the rolling deep in a seaway. While the howitzer was being transferred, a schooner was discovered coming down before the wind. As she was passing near the Clarence, a wooden gun was pointed at her, and she was commanded to heave to, which, through fright, she did immediately. She proved to be the schooner Kate Stewart, of Philadelphia. As Read was then short of provisions, and had over fifty prisoners on board, he determined to bond the Kate Stewart and make a cartel of her. He bonded her for the "sum of $7,000, payable to the President of the Confederate States, thirty days after the ratification of a treaty of peace between the Confederate States and the United States." He then burned the Clarence, and M. A. Shindler, and gave chase to a brig, which proved to be the Arabella, of New York. This vessel having a neutral cargo on board, he bonded her for $30,000.

Up to this time the Federal Government had no knowledge that Read was off the coast destroying the commerce of its citizens; but, on the 13th of June, Captain Munday, of the bark Tacony, having been landed from the cartel Kate Stewart, on the coast of New Jersey, took the train to Philadelphia, and, arriving there at 3 P. M., reported that there was a pirate off the coast, and all the scenes which he had witnessed the day before. The news was at once telegraphed to the Navy Department at Washington, and immediately the telegraph-wires waxed warm with orders to Admiral Lee, commanding the North Atlantic blockading squadron, and to the commandants of the Boston, New York, and Philadelphia navy-yards, to send out vessels in pursuit of the "pirate." It may be well to explain here that this was the generic name used by the Federal Government and its citizens for all Confederate cruisers. It was a misnomer, for a pirate is hostis humani generis, while the Confederates only made war on the United States Government and its citizens. However, it matters little what you call your enemies in war-time, so that you do not treat them when they fall into your hands according to the hard names you call them.

GIVING CHASE.

Nothing illustrates better the power and splendid resources of the United States Government at this time and the magnificent discipline of the Navy Department than the fact that, notwithstanding they were blockading with an iron cordon a coast of 3,000 miles, and occupying the inland rivers to the extent of 5,000 miles, and had twenty-five cruisers in search of the Confederate steamers Alabama and Florida, in less than three days from the reception of the news of the appearance of the Clarence-Tacony on the coast there were thirty-two armed vessels out on the high seas in search of her. Four left Hampton Roads on the night of June 13th; five left New York on the morning of the 14th, and the remaining twenty-three got out from Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and Hampton Roads on the 15th and 16th; and in the next ten days (till June 26th) there were fifteen more vessels sent out after her in obedience to the urgent appeals, petitions, and clamors of the owners, underwriters, and chambers of Commerce of the various seaboard cities along the northern coast, whose commerce was being destroyed.

ALMOST A PANIC.

To understand fully the almost-panic effect in these cities, it might be well to say that they had been comparatively free from such a visitation so close at home for about two years; not since the privateer Jefferson Davis was off the coast. But lately rumors had been threatening an attack on the New England coast by the Alabama and Florida. Moreover, this period was the climax of the Confederacy. It was straining every nerve in one grand effort. Stonewall Jackson had made his last, but splendid march around Hooker's right flank at Chancellorsville, doubling him up, and leaving him hors du combat, and General Lee, with his victorious legions, was marching triumphantly into Pennsylvania. The ironclad Atlanta had been sent out from Savannah, Ga., with a view to raising the blockade and making a raid on the northern cities, and demonstrations were being made in various directions to tighten the tension and prevent reinforcements from being drawn off to oppose Lee's advance.

No wonder, then, that affairs looked dark and gloomy, and that the pulse of the northern cities beat uneasily.

Meantime, the Tacony played havoc along the coast. On the 15th of June, in latitude 37 degrees, 40 minutes north, longitude 70 degrees, 51 minutes west, she captured and burned the brig Umpire, from Cardenas to Boston, loaded with sugar and molasses. On the 20th, in latitude 40 degrees, 50 minutes west, and longitude 69 degrees, 20 minutes west, she captured the fine packet-ship Isaac Webb, from Liverpool to New York, with 750 passengers, and the fishing-schooner Micawber. The latter was burned, but Read being unable to dispose of the large number of passengers of the Webb, she was bonded for $40,000, and sent in as a cartel to New York. On the 21st, in latitude 41 degrees north, longitude 69 degrees 10 minutes west, the Tacony captured and burned the clipper ship Byzantium, loaded with coal, and the bark Goodspeed, in ballast. On the 22d the fishing-schooners Marengo, Florence, Elizabeth Ann, Rufus Choate, and Ripple were captured, and all burned, except the Florence, which, being an old vessel, was bonded and sent in as a cartel with seventy-five prisoners.

ANOTHER WAIL.

On the same day (June 22d) news of the capture of the Isaac Webb reached New York, and another wail went up along the line for protection. Senator Morgan, of New York, on the 23d of June, at the instance of the New York Harbor and Frontier-Defence Commission, wrote to the Secretary of the Navy, requesting that "ironclads might be spared for defending the harbor of New York." "Our people," he said, "are uneasy at the boldness of the pirates, and they will not rest much longer without efforts for more adequate protection for this harbor. On the 22d instant I wrote you in relation to the frigate Roanoke, and hope to hear that she can now be spared for the defence of the port of New York." The president of the Chamber of Commerce of New York, in writing to the Secretary of the Navy on the same subject, said: "It may not be amiss to state that the war premium alone on American vessels carrying valuable cargoes exceeds the whole freight in neutral bottoms." Governor Andrew, of Massachusetts, wrote: "I am receiving representations daily, both oral and written, from towns and cities along the Massachusetts coast, setting forth their defenceless condition." The wealthy and patriotic citizens of Boston offered to send out private vessels at their own expense in search of the "pirate," if they could obtain guns from the navy-yard. Mayor Cranston, of Newport, R. I., telegraphed on June 25th: "A rebel pirate, supposed to be the Tacony, destroyed several fishing vessels outside our harbor yesterday. Will you not give us an armed steamer? Our harbor is one of the most important of the coast." To all these and other pressing calls for help the Navy Department responded with a willing hand; offering to the merchants arms and officers for any vessel which they might wish to send out, and ordering the commandants of the yards to "charter more steamers and send them after the Tacony," until by the 26th of June there were forty-seven armed vessels scouring the seas in every direction for this bold little rover. Even the practice-ships from the Naval Academy, with the midshipmen aboard, were sent out. Many of these vessels crossed and recrossed her track, and some are said to have passed close to her in the night, while others were several times only separated from her by a fog, but none were fortunate enough to find her.

STILL PURSUED HER CAREER.

Still the Tacony pursued her career unharmed. With almost every new capture Read learned through the newspapers on board of the great number of vessels that were after him, but this did not seem to annoy him, for he appears to have fairly revelled in his career of destruction. On the 23d of June he destroyed two fishing schooners. On the 24th the ship Shatemuc, from Liverpool to Boston with a large number of emigrants, was captured and bonded for $150,000. The same night the schooner Archer was captured. As by this time he knew that the enemy had a full description of the Tacony, Read now thought that it was about time to change the rig and appearance of his vessel, in order to avoid suspicion and detection, so he destroyed the bark Tacony on the 25th of June, and with the schooner Archer proceeded along up the coast, with the view of burning the shipping in some exposed harbor, or of cutting out a steamer. The morning of the 26th of June found him off Portland, Me., where he picked up two fishermen, who, taking them for a pleasure party, willingly consented to pilot them into Portland. From the fishermen he learned that the revenue cutter Caleb Cushing was in the harbor, and the passenger steamer to New York, a staunch, swift propeller, would remain in Portland during the night. He at once determined to seize the cutter and steamer that night, and at sunset entered the harbor and anchored in full view of the shipping, in the innocent guide of a fisherman. Little did the fair city of Portland dream of the excitement and commotion in store for it the next day. He explained to his men what he expected to do after dark, but his engineer expressed his doubts as to his ability to start the engines of the steamer proposed to be captured, without the assistance of another engineer, and as the nights were very short, it was evident that if they failed to get the steamer under way, after waiting to get up steam, they could not get clear of the forts at the entrance of the harbor without being discovered. Under these circumstances he decided to capture the revenue cutter, and after getting from under the forts to return and burn the shipping.

At 1:30 A. M., June 27th, having dispatched the schooner Archer to sea with three men on board, he (Read) boarded the cutter Caleb Cushing, commanded by Lieutenant Dudley Davenport of the United States Revenue Marine Service, with two boats containing nineteen men, who, instantly presenting revolvers to the heads of the watch on deck, captured her without noise or resistance. The cable could not be slipped, so it was 2 o'clock before he could get under way. By this time the wind was very light and the tide was running in. In this emergency, having put the cutter's officers and crew in irons, he put two boats out ahead with his own men to tow her, and succeeded in getting just beyond the range of the guns of the forts as day dawned. Of course, it was now too late to return and burn the shipping, so he decided to put to sea and abide his time.

PREPARATIONS FOR PURSUIT.

By 8 o'clock A. M. the news was spread abroad in the city of Portland that the cutter had been captured. The collector of the port, Jedediah Jewett, immediately made preparations for pursuit. He sent messengers to Major Andrews, Seventeenth United States Regulars, commanding Fort Preble, for guns and men, and to Colonel Mason, commanding the Seventh Maine Volunteers, at Camp Lincoln, for men to be ready to embark in steamers at once. With great promptness he chartered the fine, large steamers Forest City and Chesapeake, and a small steam tug. The Chesapeake took on board fifty bales of cotton as barricades, two brass 6-pounder guns, the greater portion of Seventh Regiment, Maine Volunteers, and fifty citizens volunteers, who had armed themselves and repaired on board. The Forest City took on board, beside her regular crew, Lieutenants Merryman and Richardson, of the United States Revenue Service and fourteen seamen belonging to the Caleb Cushing, who happened to be ashore that night, three officers, and thirty-eight men, with one 6-pounder and one 12-pounder howitzer, and forty armed volunteer citizens. This formidable array was ready and under way in the incredibly short time of one hour. They stood out to sea in pursuit, the Forest City and tug some distance in advance. About fifteen miles off the coast they discovered the cutter and immediately stood for her.

The Caleb Cushing had one 32-pounder and one 12-pounder howitzer on board, and when Read saw the three steamers bearing down on him he knew what was up, and clearing his little vessel for action, prepared to give them a warm reception. When the leading steamer, the Forest City, arrived within about two miles of him, he dropped a well-directed 32-pounder shot within a few feet of her. Approaching still nearer, another shot dropped still closer to her, which somewhat dampened the ardor of her captain and the citizen volunteers, who had come out as if for a frolic, and considering discretion the better part of valor, the captain put his vessel about and hauled off out of range, to wait for the co-operation of the Chesapeake. It is but just to state that officers and soldiers were anxious to continue on and run the cutter down, but the accumulated advice and disjointed comments of the bewildered citizens and the fear for the safety of his vessel were too much for her captain, and he put her about. When he met the Chesapeake they held a council of war, and again started for the Cushing with the intention of running her down. Coming within range, Read again opened fire on them and fired three shots, but unfortunately for him, at this time, his ammunition (all he could find) gave out, and his prisoners would not tell him where the ammunition was stowed. There were 600 pounds of powder and ninety solid shot for the 32-pounder gun on board. Had he found this, there would have been some warm work before the day was over. That he did not make this his first search when coming on board was very singular, and cannot be accounted for on any ground, except that he had been under such a severe nervous strain for the last few weeks that he was almost entirely exhausted.

HE FIRED HER.

Seeing that there was no further chance for him, in so unequal a contest, now, he, nevertheless, determined not to let the cutter be recaptured, and deliberately set to work to destroy her, first putting his prisoners in a boat, and throwing them the keys to their irons, so that they could release themselves. The few well-directed shots had made the steamers cautious about approaching him very rapidly, so he had ample time to set the cutter on fire fore and aft, and then took to his boats. The coolness and deliberation of this act are worthy of the highest praise in a naval officer. As soon as they had left the cutter, the flames burst from her in many places, and the steamers were afraid to approach her, fearing the explosion of her magazine. They, however, bore down on Read in his boats, and, as further resistance on his part was now useless, he surrendered himself and party as prisoners of war. After picking up Lieutenant Davenport and his crew they then stood out to sea a little farther, and captured the schooner Archer, which only had three men on her. The cutter blew up about 12 o'clock. Thus ended the cruise of the Clarence-Tacony-Archer. Read and his gallant little band were taken back to Portland, where the excitement was terrific, and put in prison. Major Andrews, in making his report of their affair, said: "You can form but a faint idea of the excitement now existing among the citizens of Portland and vicinity. Rumor follows rumor in rapid succession, and just before daylight this morning (June 29th) some one from the vicinity of the post went to the city with a fresh rumor, which set the whole city in a ferment. The bells were rung, and men, women, and children soon filled the streets, and were rushing hither and thither in aimless fright. I would respectfully suggest that the prisoners be sent from here as quietly and expeditiously as possible, as I do not think it safe for them to be placed in the custody of the citizens."

Lieutenant Read, in a letter written from Fort Warren to the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, says: "As all our clothing was distributed as relics to the people of Portland, I beg that you will, if possible, remit to Assistant-Paymaster Nixon a sufficient sum of money to purchase my men a change of clothing."

Such is war, and men who enter into it must take the consequences. Read and his crew were kept in prison for a little over a year, when they were exchanged as prisoners of war.

The lessons to be drawn from this little episode of the war on the sea are many and valuable, not only to the naval officer, but to the country at large, and especially to those members of Congress who oppose an increase in the navy and never stop to think that the commerce of the nation is the life of the nation, and that the destruction of that commerce is the clipping of the arteries of its wealth. That one small vessel, with twenty-two men and one gun, and a sailing-vessel at that, should have created such havoc and consternation in the days of steam, whilst forty-seven vessels (mostly steamers) were scouring the seas in search of her, is enough to make old Virgil rise up from his ashes and exclaim, "Mirabile dictu!" but what could a modern fast cruiser, of twenty-five knots, commanded by a resolute officer, and accompanied by a fast supply-vessel, do on our defenceless coast? And how are we prepared for such an emergency in case of war with a maritime nation? These subjects I leave to the consideration of those who have the fighting to do, and those who have to provide the fighting-machines. Sufficient is it to say that the country which has such officers as the commander of the Clarence-Tacony-Arcner to depend on will not lean upon broken reeds.

ROBERT H. WOOD,
Chief Clerk, Office Naval War-Records,
Washington, D. C.

EVACUATION OF RICHMOND.

Interesting Communications Bearing on the Subject.

RICHMOND, VA., November 13, 1895.

To the Editor of the Dispatch:

Some months ago, at your request, I made you a statement, which was published, as to the origin of the Richmond fire of the 3rd of April, 1865, based upon judicial records in the great insurance litigation which ensued. I observed in your last Friday's issue an affidavit of the late Mr. James A. Scott, filed in Vial's Executor vs. The Mutual Assurance Society of Virginia, a part of that litigation, in which interesting facts were given respecting the occurrences of the memorable occasion. To-day, in looking over some old papers in my office for another purpose, I came across several letters that were written to me at the time I was making investigations, as counsel of the insured, for reliable information upon the subject and which were intended to be used, if necessary, in the litigation (unless depositions should be required), but which I had no need to use. Since every fact touching the matter ought to be preserved, as part of the history of the great disaster and of the fall of the Confederate capital, and these letters seem to me to be of particular interest and value, I send them to you. The first is from Colonel John Wilder Atkinson, of the Confederate artillery, who was stationed near Chaffin's Bluff, and on the retreat approached Richmond early on the morning of the 3rd of April, and saw the fire from a distance that lent sublimity to the view, without the terrors of the scene. As is well-known, he was before the war a prominent citizen of Richmond, and since the war, has resided in Wilmington, N. C. During the war a more gallant, and, for a civilian, a more justly distinguished Confederate officer, was scarcely known. If a pleasing reminiscence of his life in Richmond may be recalled the marriage last evening at St. Paul's church of his highly-esteemed son, John Wilder Atkinson, Jr., to one of Richmond's jewels reminds me of the brilliant occasion of his own marriage, forty years ago, to the lovely and charming Miss E. A. Mayo, sister of Mr. Peter H. Mayo, and daughter of Mr. Robert A. Mayo, deceased, at which I remember that my lamented friend, Marmaduke Johnson, and myself, then young barristers, were groomsmen, and the fashion and beauty, from far and near, were assembled, amid flowers and sparkling jets d'eau de Cologne, in the famous old family mansion, Powhatan (below the city), radiantly illuminated for the event. By contrast, it was his destiny some ten years after, at no great distance from that historic place, and immediately across the James river, to witness a sad and awful, but more splendid illumination. The description is equally graphic and touching of his silent midnight retreat from the Confederate lines, without the knowledge of the Federal commander, in direct front, and the forlorn approach, amid deafening explosions of wrecked war vessels, to the sublime spectacle of burning Richmond, that, like Milton's ascending sun, "Flamed in the forehead of the morning sky."

Here is the letter:

WILMINGTON, N. C., Oct. 25, 1878.

To John Howard, Esq.:

My Dear Sir,—I received your letter of the 23d instant this morning.

For several months prior to the retirement of General Lee's army from the defences around Petersburg that portion of the command to which I was immediately attached under General C. W. C. Lee, was stationed at Chaffin's bluff, in front of and only a few hundred yards from Fort Harrison. I commanded at the time two of the Virginia battalions of artillery, being then lieutenant colonel of artillery. On Sunday night, April 2, 1865, under orders from General G. W. C. Lee, I drew in my first picket guard and sentinels as quietly as possible, and left our lines about midnight, and with the residue of Custis Lee's Division started on the memorable retreat.

Our movement had been so quietly effected that I am sure the enemy had no idea of what was going on, and certainly made no demonstration of pursuing; and I was afterwards informed by some of the Yankee officers stationed at Fort Harrison that the withdrawal of my troops was not discovered by General Wetzel until reported at or about daylight Monday morning, April 3d. Our tents were all, by Custis Lee's order, left standing, and our guns were not removed from the embrasures.

For the convenience of transportation a pontoon bridge had previously been thrown across the river at a point between Chaffin's bluff and Richmond but not far from our camp. Custis Lee's Division crossed upon this bridge, and was led by him on the south side of the James, several miles in the direction of Manchester. Just before daylight on Monday morning we got in sight of burning Richmond, and almost simultaneously with our discovery that Richmond was burning we began to hear the report of explosions on the river, which had been caused by the blowing up of the Confederate steamers Jamestown and Athens. These were not ironclads. I have no doubt that these explosions first announced to General Wetzel the withdrawal of the Confederate forces from his front, and the purposed surrender of Richmond.

A scene more awful, and at the same time sublime, I never witnessed certainly, or even conceived, than that presented by the burning of the Confederate capital in the distance, rendered, of course, the more impressive by the explosions on the river not far distant, which almost deafened us. It is a scene I shall never forget.

Of course these explosions were caused by our own officers, who in abandoning these vessels had them blown up to avoid the possibility of their being of service to the enemy.

I think I have answered above your several inquiries, which it gratifies me to do, and now remain, truly your friend, JOHN WILDER ATKINSON,
Former lieutenant-colonel Confederate States Artillery.

It should not be omitted to state, what is too little known, that upon approaching the city, then in conflagration, General Wetzel reversed the negro brigade, then in advance, and placed it in the rear, in respect to the feelings of the citizens, and to avoid conflict; and that he promptly addressed his whole command to the arrest and extinguishment of the fire, which was thereby effected, and the whole city saved from immediate peril of destruction. Too much credit and gratitude cannot be accorded in honor of such wise, considerate, and noble conduct.

The following letter was from Colonel W. T. Robins, a gallant and meritorious officer of the Confederate cavalry, then of Gloucester, but now a citizen of Richmond:

GLOUCESTER COURTHOUSE,
February 20, 1878.

My Dear Sir: Your favor of the 11th of February reached me in due course of mail. In reply to your inquiry as to the burning of Richmond in 1865, on the day of the evacuation, I can only give you the following statement:

My regiment crossed the river from Richmond to Manchester about 8 A. M., as well as I can remember, after the span of Mayo's bridge over the canal was fired. I remained in Manchester some time after crossing, but just how long I cannot now remember. However, I do remember seeing the fire on the Richmond side, and that quite a high wind was prevailing at the time, blowing from the river in the direction of the city. I remember having feared, in observing the fire with the effect of the high wind upon it, that the whole city would be consumed. The flames were spreading northward, fanned by the wind, up into the heart of the city. My position on the Manchester side was on elevated ground, which enabled me to observe perfectly that part of Richmond burning at that time.

I have the honor to remain
Very truly your obedient servant,
W. T. ROBINS.

John Howard, Esq.

Here the strong element of the intervening wind in the extension of the fire, so much insisted upon by me in all the litigation as the proximate and legal cause of the insured losses, again appears, and I am reminded of a quotation I made in my argument in the Graseme insurance case in the Supreme Court of the United States, from Virgil's vivid description of the entrance of the Greeks into "burning Troy," as the Federal troops into Richmond, and the extension of the fire by the same cause:

—— Irruant Danai, et tectum omne tenebant.
Illicet ignis edax summa ad fastigia vento
Volvitur; exsuperant flammae, furit aestus ad auras.

In rushed the Greeks and held the place; on high
Borne by the wind, in sheeted flakes of flame,
Rolled on the conflagration to the stars.

The last letter, to which I have above referred, was from the War Department of the United States, in response to inquiries made by me in a personal interview with the Adjutant-General.

War Department,
Adjutant General's Office,
Washington, May 22, 1879.

John Howard, Esq., Attorney at Law, Richmond, Va.:

Sir,—Referring to your inquiry of the 21st instant, I have respectfully to inform you that no record can be found in this office of any orders issued by the Government of the United States directing commanders in the field to seize tobacco belonging to adherents of the Confederacy.

It appears, however, of record that on the 4th of March, 1865, General Grant directed Colonel S. H. Roberts, commanding a brigade of the Twenty-fourth Army Corps, to proceed with his brigade to the vicinity of Fredericksburg, Va., for the purpose of seizing or destroying wherever found all property being used in barter for unauthorized articles of trade between the rebels and northern cities, and to break up the contraband trade carried on between Fredericksburg and Richmond.

Under these instructions, Colonel Roberts captured and destroyed a large quantity of tobacco, including some 400 cases of that article, which were brought in and turned over to the quartermaster's department, at Fort Monroe, Va. Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

E. D. TOWNSEND,
Adjutant-General.

This communication is important, as showing that there never was, in point of fact, any necessity for the destruction of the Richmond tobacco, and it fully accords with the statement of Mr. James A. Scott, an excellent man and well-known tobacconist, above mentioned, which in effect was that no interference was made by the Federal Government at or after the capture of Richmond with the tobacco undestroyed, but that, on the contrary, it was permitted to remain in the hands of its owners, and to be disposed of by sale and shipment abroad, as before the war, and as if no war had existed.

The real, and causative cause, causa causans of the destruction of the tobacco in the Richmond warehouses by fire, for which combustible materials had beforehand been carefully prepared, was an unwise act of the Confederate Congress requiring commanders in the field to destroy such property upon the imminent danger of its falling into the hands of the enemy. As shown in my previous communication, above referred to, it was in obedience to that act that General Lee issued orders under which the tobacco was burned, and the Confederate Congress was alone responsible for the fatal mistake. Yours truly,

JOHN HOWARD.

RUNNING THE BLOCKADE.

Good War-Time Stories by an Old C. S. A. Commander.

(Galveston Daily News.)

A reporter spent an evening recently with Commander John C. Brain, who graduated from the naval academy, and rendered distinguished service in the Confederate States navy.

"Blockade running," said he, "is a science. It is attended with great risks and dangers, but when properly studied it may be operated with absolute success and comparative safety. I hear it said in these times that blockades cannot be run now on account of the search light, but I can run a blockade now. I would get a search light, too. While it is true that the number of vessels in a fleet is known to each in the cordon, the location and position of each at all times is not known, and for that reason, the uncertainty that would surround the identity of a blockade runner carrying a search light would give her an advantage, and an opportunity to reach a point of safety before she was discovered.

"Enormous profits were made during the late war by blockade running by both private parties and corporations. The only ports of the Confederacy for running the blockade were Galveston, Tex., Mobile, Ala., Charleston, S. C., and Wilmington, N. C. The latter was the principal port, for the reason that it was more accessible, it having two channels leading into the port—the new and old inlets. The old inlet, being the southern entrance, was guarded by Fort Caswell and Fort Fisher. The new inlet from the north was guarded only by Fort Fisher and a small battery on land. Both of these inlets lead into Cape Fear river, on which is situated the city of Wilmington, twelve miles from its mouth. On the coast on each side of the inlet flying batteries of artillery, commanded by Colonel Lamb, Confederate States army, were kept patrolling the shores at night time to protect any blockade runner that might have to be run ashore to keep her from falling into the hands of the enemy. These batteries did valuable services.

"Notwithstanding the Federal Government did all in its power to effectually seal up or blockade this port, it having at one time nearly 200 vessels in the blockading squadron, in one night twelve vessels forced the blockade successfully and entered the port. Fourteen attempted to effect entrance, but two were captured. These vessels were loaded with provisions, medical stores, arms, and munitions of war for the Confederate Government.

"The inducement for running the blockade was the enormous value of cotton, it being bought in the Confederacy for 25 and 30 cents a pound in gold, or its equivalent, and sold outside for $1.60 to $1.80 per pound; consequently the profits were enormous, even if the risks were great. Most of the blockade running was done by corporations. Among the largest of these engaged in the business was the Bee Company, of Charleston, S. C., who owned the famous blockade runner Cyrene. She ran the blockade thirty-two times in and out of Charleston, S. C. When Charleston was evacuated she was lying at her wharf there, and her owners burned her rather than allow her to fall into the hands of the enemy. The Confederate Government owned several blockade-running vessels to replenish the supply store, and also several States owned blockade runners, among them Virginia and North Carolina. To give an idea how quickly these ships were constructed an order could be given to a shipbuilder on the Mersey or Clyde for a ship costing from £40,000 to £50,000 sterling, $200,000 to $250,000. These vessels were anchored in the river ready for sea sixty days after the contracts were signed. These vessels were light draught, requiring not over 9 feet of water, and had a speed of fifteen to eighteen knots an hour. After completion the vessel was cleared from Liverpool or the Clyde for the port of Nassau or St. George, Bermuda. When she arrived in port her top hamper was taken down and the blockade-running crew at once shipped. The captain was paid the enormous wages of $5,000 in gold and $5,000 in Confederate money. The pilot was paid $5,000 in gold, and the chief engineer was paid the same; the first assistant, $3,000; second, third, and fourth engineers, $2,000 each per voyage. One voyage per month was made, each being made in the dark of the moon. Seamen and firemen were paid $30 a month, $100 on signing shipping articles, the balance on return of ship to port. Officers were paid on return of ship to port. The leadsman was paid $500 a month. His services were required only when the ship was coming in or going out of port. The signal officer was paid the same.

A LEADEN COLOR.

"The ship being fully prepared, having been painted a leaden color, so as not to be distinguished in the dark, and having taken in her cargo, her inward cargo, consisting of bacon, provisions, pig-lead, boiler-iron, medical stores, and munitions of war, she at once cleared for Halifax, N. S. All these blockade-runners had English register and English colors. Owing to her Majesty's proclamation of April, 1861, forbidding her subjects to engage in assisting either side during the late unpleasantness, these ships, when they made the mistake of entering the port of Wilmington, instead of Halifax, and running the blockade, violated their registers, and, consequently, on the return voyage, had to get out a new register.

"All the vessels, the property of the Confederate Government, were registered as the property of Frazer, Trenholm & Co., Liverpool, Eng., the commercial agents of the Confederate Government in that country.

"The blockade-runners were built with a double set of boilers, and prior to making the coast steam was got up on all the boilers, so as to give the ship all the steam she could carry. Every vessel had steam blow-off cocks below the water-line. No lights were shown on the vessel while at sea, and all vessels burned anthracite coal, which is comparatively smokeless, and cost from $18 to $30 a ton. No dogs or roosters were allowed on board ship. Officers and men while running the blockade were always in their stocking-feet.

"In running a blockade the leadsman is stationed in the main chains, the signal-officer generally amidships with his signal-boxes, the captain and pilot and two men at the wheel on the bridge and two men aft at the wheel, so in case the bridge is shot away they can unshackle the chains and steer the ship from the stern. All lights are extinguished. The land was generally made by the ship six to ten miles to the southward of the old inlet at Wilmington, and about the same distance to the northward or new inlet. The blockade was generally run from a quarter to half a mile off the coast, and sometimes nearer. Military telegraph offices were stationed at close intervals along the coast, ten to fifteen miles to the southern or old inlet, and the same distance to the northern or new inlet; and by the signal-officer aboard the blockade-runner cathing one of these telegraph stations with his signals communication was at once made with Fort Fisher and Fort Caswell to the effect that such a vessel, with Captain So-and-So, giving his name, was in the act of running the blockade, and to look out for her and protect her, which was often done when the blockade-runner was chased by the enemy.

IN THE DAY.

"The blockade was run only twice during the war in Wilmington in the daytime. Once by the Gibraltar, the ex-Confederate war steamer Sumter, which was commanded by Captain Semmes, and which, by the way, was the first war vessel ever floated by the government. By a trick she succeeded in running it from the north'ard by hoisting the Federal flag. She ran down to the fleet, the Federals thinking she was a transport from the North. She had on board four 200-pound Whitworth guns and other munitions of war for Fort Sumter, Charleston harbor, and Fort Fisher. She got under the protection of Fort Fisher before the Federals discovered their error. The Will o' the Wisp, Captain Caper, owner and commander, succeeded on another occasion in running the blockade in the daytime. The captain was a Scotchman, and one day some of the blockade runners on the Board of Trade were guying him about the insignificant appearance of his vessel, which was small, but one of the best for speed in the port. She could make eighteen knots an hour. They offered to bet him £100,000 against £50,000 that he could not run the blockade in daytime. He took them up. It was customary for blockade-runners to load and run down and anchor off Smithville, at the mouth of Cape Fear river, under the protection of our forts, and then make the blockade at night. The Federal fleet saw the Will o' the Wisp coming down the river, and supposed, of course, she would anchor, but instead she shaped her course right through the fleet. They had nothing that could catch her. They fired two shots at her, one passing through the cabin above the water line, and the other carrying away her flagstaff. Captain Caper won his £100,000, and became the hero of the day.

"Showing the systematic manner in which the blockade was run, I remember the Virginia Importing and Exporting Company, of Petersburg, Va., who owned a line of two fine ships named the City of Petersburg and the Old Dominion, which for over two years ran the blockade out of the port of Wilmington and port of St. George's, Bermuda, on regular schedule advertised time. Each of these ships cost $250,000, and after the war they were taken to Liverpool, England, and made a daily line between the city of Liverpool, England, and the city of Dublin, Ireland.

STRANGE NAMES.

"Many strange names were given to ships running the blockade. Among them was a line of three funnel-boats belonging to a London blockade-running firm. These boats were christened Letter B, Letter Go, and Letter Rip. The finest vessel in the business only made one voyage. She was christened Colonel Lamb, and was built to carry 15,000 bales of cotton. The war ended soon after she was built and put an end to her career as a blockade-runner.

"One of the sad incidents in running the blockade was connected with a ship belonging to James H. Crenshaw, of Richmond, Va. His ship cleared in 1863 for St. George's, Bermuda, and her pilot, named Davis, had yellow-fever, and was just recovering from it. The captain asked him if he would take the ship in. He replied that he would if it was the last ship he ever piloted. The night the ship made the coast he took a relapse, and was carried on the bridge in a chair, and successfully piloted the ship into port, and when the ship dropped anchor his spirit went aloft.

"Another distressing incident was when the Greyhound, Captain Beard, was running in the new inlet. She accidentally ran ashore. Mrs. Greenhow, who was so long kept a prisoner in her residence, at Washington, by the Federal Government, and guarded by a negro, was a passenger on board this ship with her daughter. In stepping into a boat to go ashore she made a misstep and was carried down by the weight of gold that she had in two belts around her body. Her body was recovered next day.

"The Greyhound, in running the blockade out of Wilmington, was captured by the United States sloop-of-war Connecticut. Ensign Harding was put in command of her, with orders to take her to New York. She had as passengers Mr. Pollard, editor and proprietor of the Richmond Examiner, and the famous Belle Boyd.

"The Confederate Government built the first steel ships at Laird's yard, in Liverpool, England, that were ever built. These were for the purpose of running the blockade, and were christened the Owl, the Bat, and the Wren. The Bat and Wren were captured on their first or second voyage in running the blockade. These ships were so fine, that the Bat, after her capture by the Federals, was fitted up and put in condition as a yacht for Mr. Lincoln, and was used for that purpose all through the war. The Owl, which was commanded by Captain J. N. Moffett, was one of the most successful blockade-runners of the war. After landing me with dispatches for the Confederate Government in January, 1865, at Lockwood's Folly (or Windy Hill), and not being able to find out whether Fort Fisher was captured, or whether or not Wilmington had fallen, Captain Moffett undertook to ascertain this information himself. He ran in under Fort Fisher, which had fallen, and anchored with a hawser off Smithville. He sent the pilot ashore with orders, in case the Yankees were in possession, to bring Mrs. Moffett and their children and return to the ship. The pilot was gone about ten minutes, when he returned with his wife and children, and reported that the enemy was in full possession. The men were standing by with tackle, and immediately hitched onto the boat and swung it aboard with its precious burden. Captain Moffett had a man stationed at the bits, and as soon as all were safely on board passed the word to cut the hawser, which was done, and the ship's head swung around and she stood out to sea. Three or four other blockade-runners entering port that night, unaware of the enemy's possession of the fort, were captured as they were in the act of drinking their wine while jollifying over the delusion of having successfully run the blockade.

SPEED.

"Captain Moffett returned to Bermuda, where he coaled up his ship and cleared for the port of Habana, Cuba, where he took in a cargo for the Trans-Mississippi Department. Safely running the blockade into the port of Galveston, after discharging his cargo, he loaded up with a return cargo of cotton, which was the last cargo of cotton carried out of the port of Galveston during the war. He returned to Habana and laid there some time, and was ordered to take the ship to Liverpool, England, which he did, and his vessel soon went to the bone-yard. These blockade runners were useless as merchantmen, because they were too light—that is, their capacity was too small, and they consumed too much coal. They were speedy, and were soon out of the reach of any war vessel.

"In May, 1864, I was in command of the blockade runner Annie, a government vessel. One Saturday night fourteen of us attempted to run the blockade, and twelve of us succeeded in getting in. I had forty boxes of lemons and ten boxes of oranges for the hospitals, $80,000 in government gold, arms, bacon, pig lead, iron, and valuable stores. In 1863, when the Confederates were hard up for salt, a Captain McMillan, of Charleston, S. C., ran a blockade to the port of Nassau, where he purchased a large fore-and-aft centre-board schooner and loaded her with salt,