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REMINISCENCE OF THE WAR.

FOR THE TRIBUNE.

It was early in '64, when Grant was still holding Lee in his grip, and the greatest soldier of modern times was marching from Atlanta to the sea, that the intelligence arrived by the dispatch boat Gettysburg of some disaster to our forces in North Carolina. There was a force at the town of Plymouth supposed to be strong enough to hold that place. This force was supplemented by a few old "tubs" called gun boats, constructed into such from old ferry boats. But the times were such that the government of necessity, availed itself of everything within reach that could be rendered serviceable. It was well known to us, at the period spoken of, that two large and powerful iron-clad rams were fitting out on the Roanoke river, with a view of destroying the small naval force in North Carolina, and smash things generally. At the time a joint expedition was in process of formation, to ascend the Roanoke, to capture Fort Branch on the way and cut out the iron-clads or destroy them.

Before this expedition was got in shape, the Rebel ram Albemarle, swept down the river without opposition until reaching Plymouth. The situation in all its force presented itself to the two Union officers commanding the land and naval forces in that section.

The town of Plymouth is situated on the left bank of the Roanoke river about two miles above its mouth, where it empties into Albemarle Sounds. A few miles in the distance could be seen Roanoke Island, captured early in the war by the forces under Gen. Burnside. Had the Union forces at Plymouth been forced to retreat, they must have done so by water, and the advent of iron-clad ram, barred the way. Gen. Wessell, commanding the Union forces, found himself surrounded by land and water. Generals Branch and Hoke of the Confederate army, were in the rear of the town with a large force, and the Albemarle in his front on the river. Both the Confederate generals and the troops in their command, were raised in that section, and were familiar with every foot of the country. If there was any way of escaped from the place by the hemmed in forces it must be by the capture or destruction of the Albemarle. To that end the U. S. naval officer and the small force under his command bent all their energies. Ascending the river in his wooden vessel to grapple with the iron monster, and if possible, board her. The unequal fight took place in front of Plymouth—the combatants not twenty yards apart. The Union commander soon discovered that every shot aimed at the Albemarle had no effect, as her plating of 4 1/2 inch railroad iron, turned the missiles harmlessly away. To get a shot at the Albemarle between wind and water was the last hope. Coolly he went to work to accomplish it and aimed the shot, which rebounded, and killed him where he stood. This ended the engagement. The Union vessel got out in a crippled condition—guns dismantled, and the decks streaming with the blood of the dead and dying. The Southfield, an old New York ferry boat, converted into a gun boat, fell into the hands of the enemy and Wessell's command made prisoners. Such were the disasters reported at the Division headquarters.

While these movements were taking place, another force of a different nature was getting ready to deal with the Confederate iron cruisers. A very young man named Cushing, a native of New Hampshire, and serving in the U. S. Navy in a subordinate position, proposed a method of putting an end to the Rebel rams Albemarle and Consort. His scheme was pronounced impracticable and impossible of execution. "I can do it," he said, and after much intreaty permission was granted him to address the Secretary of the Navy in reference to his project. Mr. Fox, the assistant secretary lent a willing ear and placed the matter in a favorable light before Mr. Wells, the secretary. As everything relating to this enterprise was marked "disapproved" by the senior officers of the Navy, Secretary Wells hesitated in giving his approval. Cushing stood firm as the granite hills from which he came, and pressed the chief of his department with such earnestness, that Secretary said he would place the matter before the President. "Place me before the President," said Cushing; and he did. President Lincoln was at all times approachable and carried no "red tape." Promptly the order was issued to permit Lieut. Cushing to carry out his project.

In fifteen years service, I never saw officer or man more confident of himself and his undertaking than Cushing. "I'll do it," he said, "you'll see I'll do it." Hurriedly a boat was got ready at Norfolk, Va. A launch boat converted into a steamer, from which no steam, smoke or sound escaped—all repressed by some skillful contrivance. The arrangement of this boat consisted of a howitzer, torpedo and a few small arms. Any other supplies or assistance needed were to be supplied by Capt. McComb of the Shamrock, then flagship in the waters of North Carolina. To reach Capt. McComb under the then circumstances seemed impossible. To pass from Virginia—a part of which was in our possession—into North Carolina, and evade meeting the enemy was no easy matter. To this day it is unaccountable to many, as it is to the writer, how every movement on land and water of ours, reached the Confederate authorities. To get over this barrier even with the few who from necessity had any knowledge of the enterprise, seemed improbable. When all was ready, a report was given out when the craft would start, but a start was made 48 hours before the time named, and in the hazy gray of morning rounded the small town of Edenton, N. C. Some nondescript, as the lookout from the vessels reported, was seen moving along the shore. This nondescript was Cushing and his little party, who, when the mist cleared away, hoisted the flag, and made for the flag ship to report to the flag officer, Com. McComb. Having met this gallant officer on previous occasions, a most warm and cordial reception was extended. McComb was then in the hey day of his life. His son accompanied him everywhere as his secretary and clerk. "So you'll be just in time for Lannigan's ball," he said to Cushing.

There were in his command some four or five double enders, so called by being built to head in any direction without turning as other steamers do. These vessels were built to do service on inland waters and proved most serviceable. Their armament was heavy, consisting of six, eight and nine inch shot and shell guns, and two swivel or pivot eleven-inch grape and canister guns. These guns can be worked with extraordinary rapidity and are most effective.

From some of the officers we learned that the Albemarle had come out from her moorings at Plymouth, accompanied by a regiment of soldiers on other boats to witness the destruction or surrender of the Yankee fleet. The fleet, such as it was, was all double-enders, and under command of Commodore Melancthon Smith. Capt. Francis A. Roe, whom I had known in Washington in '61, was in command of one of the double enders. He was a native of Virginia, but stood true to the flag, and had no peer in his branch of the service. He was executive officer of the Pensacola, off Alexandria, Va., when McClellan was organizing the army of the Potomac, in '61, and went down to the gulf with Admiral Farragut to capture New Orleans. More attention, probably, was given to him on account of his being a Southern man, just the same as there was to Farragut and General Thomas. Capt. Roe was a tall, dark, swarthy man; a countenance and eye like Gen. Mahone of the Confederacy. Somehow or another with all his fine abilities, promotion came very slow to him, like the the irascible Gen. Bragg. "Twas said he was all the time in hot water. It appeared that when the ram came down the Albemarle Sounds to destroy the Yankees, Capt. Roe rushed for him at full speed, striking him a terrible blow, but in doing so broke all the fore part of his own vessel, added to which he made an effort to grapple with the enemy and board her. Failing in this, he had sacks of powder on deck to throw into the smoke stacks of the Albemarle and blow him up. After a terrific combat the enemy was forced to retire, and the regiment that came down to help capture the Yankees, were taken prisoners, and just as they were captured, sent to Norfolk to be disposed of as prisoners of war.

Capt. Roe did not fight his vessel according to regulations, consequently trouble sprung up between him and the flag officer, now Admiral, and both were removed from the scene of the conflict, and that was how McComb of the Shamrock, arrived to be just in time for "Lannigan's ball." With him and the other commanders there appeared to exist complete harmony, although with some there was no difference in rank, except that conferred by seniority. Such was the state of things when Cushing put in an appearance. A short council of war was held, "an everything," as Capt. McNally would say, "settled in the most

amicable manner."

Subsequent events showed that the Confederate forces at Plymouth were informed of the attempt about to be made, and had the Albemarle entrenched alongside the batteries of the town, and had a number of logs secured around to prevent the full force of the anticipated blow striking her. Above the town, the same precautions were adopted, although attack was not expected from that quarter. A map of the country showed that an attack was feasible from the upper side if a force could be got there. The Roanoke and Chowan rivers run on a parallel line for some distance. Between the two is a considerable stream called the Middle river, which, in places, was so tortuous and narrow that seldom, if ever, had it been utilized previous to the time of which I write. The stream is an arm or spur of the Roanoke, branching off at a point a short distance above the town of Plymouth and empties into the Sounds between the mouth of the Roanoke and the town of Edenton. The intermediate space between the Roanoke and the Middle rivers is an impassible swamp. This rather lengthy description is necessary on account of the positions of the contending forces and consequent results. An attempt was made in the forenoon to ascend the Roanoke, but was found to be impracticable. The heavy guns of the enemy commanded the approaches, and no vessel of wooden build could breast the storm of iron hail that fell on all sides. McComb backed out, falling back to his old anchorage. There was, however, something learned of great importance. About a mile this side of the approach to the town of Plymouth, the old New York ferry boat referred to in the fore part of this article, was found to be moored across the passage way, having on board a strong picket guard. From each end of the craft, a number of logs secured by chains, extended from bank to bank.

To insure the destruction of the Albemarle it was necessary to capture this craft and all on board, without any alarm being given. That afternoon volunteers were called for to perform the task, and so many responded, that a selection had to be made. Soon everything was in readiness, and only waiting for the moon to retire behind the hills. At last the small party got on their way; the sailors pulling with muffled oars, the soldiers cool and steady. The torpedo boat bringing up the rear. Silence and darkness shook hands together. In a short time the hull of the old Southfield became visible. Nearer and nearer, and no picket boat in sight. A few moments more and the old ferry boat was in possession of its original owners. After the capture of the Confederate guard, they were placed in the hold and the hatches put down to prevent any alarm being given. It was a complete surprise, and augured well for the success of the expedition. In a few moments, the logs secured to the Southfield were removed, and on went Cushing and his few men to glory or a grave. Hedging close to the right bank of the river he carefully approached the Albemarle. It was then about 2 o'clock a. m.; the lights were burning brightly in the town and soldiers' quarters. Sentinels paced up and down the wharf with measured step, and close by lay the doomed vessel. Now or never was the work to be done. Down came the avenging messenger; the middle of the stream was reached, when the reflection of the lights on the shore falling the water, brought into view the steam launch. The challenge came hurriedly: "What boat is that approaching?" No answer. Again and again came the challenge. "You'll know damned soon," muttered Cushing, and so they did.

The howitzer on the steam launch replied to the volley of musketry; the few guns and revolvers, ditto. But the final answer came in the rush for the ram; everything on board of her became alive with motion. It was no use, however; Cushing, lanyard in hand, lowered the torpedo and forced his little craft over the logs. The torpedo made its way under the ram, and there exploded with a terrific report.

Cushing dived under the water and escaped to the swamp; two of his men were killed and two taken prisoners. Among the latter was Major Swan, now living in New Hampshire. A few days after the event described, the town of Plymouth was again in our possession and so remained until the close of the war.

The Albemarle was raised, repaired and sold for a large sum to a foreign power. Plymouth was of little importance in itself, but the ram might have done as the Merrimack did; incalculable damage. Her consort was not completed when the curtain of rebellion fell at Apomattox. J.

SEN. JONES' ALASKA GOLD MINE.

A Big Bonanza in Alaska, and the Senator on Top Again.

Letters from San Francisco and Alaska report that the Hon. John P. Jones, who on March 4th of this year entered upon his third term as a U. S. Senator from Nevada, is once more on the high road to fortune by virtue of his share in the Paris gold mine on Douglass Island, Alaska. When Jones was elected to the Senate in 1872, to succeed ex-Gov. Nye of Nevada, he was the boss millionaire of the Comstock lode, and was reported to be worth some \$5,000,000 as his share of the profits of the bonanza struck in the Crown Point mine, at that time the richest mine on the Comstock, but which was soon surpassed by the big bonanzas of the Consolidated Virginia and California, which gave their colossal fortunes to Flood & O'Brien, Mackay, and Fair.

Like other men who have become suddenly rich by a stroke of good luck, Jones embarked in many and varied speculations, and dropped his money almost as rapidly as he had acquired it. He went into a great mining enterprise in Kern county, California, in company with ex-Senator Stewart and the late Trener W. Park. The enterprise ended in a total failure and the loss of a very large amount of money. He started the watering place of Santa Monica, near Los Angeles, and built a railroad which never paid its running expenses. He built an extravagant building for a Turkish bath in San Francisco, and finally in 1879, shortly after he had entered upon his second term in the Senate, he invested his bottom dollar in the delusive Sierra Nevada mine, which was expected to rival the Consolidated Virginia in the bigness of its bonanza.

The Sierra Nevada, at the north end of the Comstock lode, had been worked for several years, the assessments had been many and frequent, the dividends nil. The shares had dropped down, to 85 cents, when news came that a bonanza had been struck. The mining sharps and speculators of San Francisco had decided that Consolidated Virginia was about played out, and they rushed into Sierra Nevada and ran the shares up to \$215. The higher they went the more eager were the speculators to get in. Even such astute mining men as Jones, Flood, Skae, and many others were caught. The bubble burst and the shares dropped almost as rapidly as they had risen. The are again down to 75 cents. Jones' Crown Point millions had changed hands, and the mining outlook on the Pacific coast was decidedly gloomy.

Nearly coincident with the collapse of the Sierra Nevada boom, gold was found by two prospectors from Sitka in a small creek on the coast of Alaska, near the Indian villages of Takon and Ank, about 150 miles northeast of Sitka. The prospectors followed the course of the creek up a gorge between high and precipitous mountain to its source in a plateau about three miles from tide water, and there found indications of surface deposits of free gold and several promising veins of quartz. When news of the discovery reached Sitka it stirred up the few white residents of that sleepy little town, and there was a general exodus to the new diggings. The placer and quartz veins were quickly located and claimed, the officers of the United States steamship Jamestown, stationed at Sitka, being early and eager locators. They expected that when the news reached San Francisco it would cause an excitement there and a rush to invest in the newly discovered gold field. In this they were disappointed. Mining interests in San Francisco were under a cloud of distrust, and the moderate and small operators were cleaned out, and had nothing left to invest in Alaska mines, even if they had believed in them, which they didn't.

The camp at Harrisburg, since changed to Juneau, attracted only the floating whites of Sitka and Wrangle, with a contingent of gold hunters from the exhausted Cassiar placers in British Columbia. Every foot of placer ground was staked off and worked with more or less success, but on the quartz lodes, which needed capital to develop them, work was limited to the assessment work required by law to complete the titles to the claims. There was no capital in the camp to pay for machinery, and none could be had from San Francisco. The second and third summers brought a few recruits from San Francisco, Portland and Victoria, but they were needy prospectors seeking locations that would cost nothing.

Finding every promising spot on the placers of the mainland taken up, the new comers turned their attention to Douglass Island, which is separated from the mainland by a channel a quarter of a mile wide and navigable for the largest steamers to Harrisburg, or, as it is now called, Juneau. Above Juneau the channel narrows to a canoe passage. Douglass Island is about sixteen miles long, and four or five miles wide. Its surface is broken up into high hills, covered with pine forests, which rise abruptly from the water. Indications were found of gold in a small stream leading up into the hills opposite Juneau, and locations were made without any very sanguine hope that they would ever rival in value the locations on the opposite mainland.

A Mr. Treadwell, a builder and contractor of San Francisco, went to Juneau, partly for his health and partly to look at the mining district. After prospecting the mining claims in the mainland plateau and on the island, he bought the unworked claim on the island now known as the Paris mine, for \$800. After prospecting it enough to be entirely satisfied with his purchase, he returned to San Francisco and formed a partnership with four wealthy men to own and work the mine. The work was to be prosecuted quietly and economically until it could be shown that the property had a positive value, which would warrant the erection of large works. The joint property was divided into six shares, Treadwell retaining one share; Col. J. J. Fry, a former partner of Sharon, taking one; Edward Fry one, Horace James Freeborn two. Treadwell was appointed manager, and returned to the mine. Tunneling was begun and actively prosecuted, and a small stamp mill set up. While this was going on a strong party of squatters had taken possession of the top of the hill, had stripped it of timber, and found a rich placer which they claimed the right to work on the plea that the mining location bought by Treadwell did not cover the placer claim. They were in the wrong, and were trespassers without a shadow of right, but there was no court in the Territory to expel them. They were men who, whether right or wrong, would not give up the ground until they were forced to yield. So they held on for more than two years, and took off about \$200,000. Senator Jones acquired from Mr. Freeborn one-half of his Freeborn's one-third interest in the mine. This will undoubtedly make the jolly Senator a rich man again. The Paris claim covers 1,500 feet of mining ground running parallel with the ship channel. The ground rises up some 300 feet above the water and has been tunneled for a distance of 400 feet from the water front. The tunnel has a gently rising grade down which the ore-laden cars descend by gravity to a large 120-stamp mill which has now been at work about six months. All the mining and milling work is above the high water level. Supplies for the mill and mine are landed alongside of the mill. Wood and water are abundant, and no gold-producing mine in the world is more favorably situated for easy and economical working. Experts who worked for years on the Comstock declare that the Paris mountain covers a larger mass of ore than can be profitably worked, than has ever been found in the entire Comstock lode. The popular senior Senator from Nevada is to be congratulated upon an investment which will yield him an income of \$250,000 to \$300,000 a year. The success of the Paris mine is starting active developments upon the adjoining properties on Douglass Island, as well upon the hitherto neglected claims on the opposite mainland. Prospecting is being actively carried on above and below Juneau, and there is strong evidence in favor of the belief that Alaska holds many valuable deposits of gold, and will soon rank as one of the largest contributors to the world's stock of that precious metal.

The Grand Island (Neb.) Times wept and turned its rules when Vanderbilt died.

A new Republican paper, the Tribune, has appeared in Philadelphia.

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