

KEARSARGE AND ALABAMA

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PROVIDENCE: PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY, 1894

in

PERSONAL NARRATIVES

OF EVENTS IN THE

WAR OF THE REBELLION

BEING PAPERS READ BEFORE THE

RHODE ISLAND SOLDIERS AND SAILORS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

[MILITARY ORDER OF THE LOYAL LEGION OF THE UNITED STATES]

VOLUME VIII

PROVIDENCE: PUBLISHED BY THE SOCIETY, 1894-1899.

KEARSARGE AND ALABAMA

ON the 5th day of February, 1862, the sloop-of-war *Kearsarge*, a new vessel of about one thousand tons, commanded by Capt. Charles W. Pickering, sailed from Portsmouth Navy Yard down the Piscataqua River, past the Isles of Shoals, out to sea.

The course was set to the southward and eastward, and in a short time we ran into the Gulf Stream and came into rough weather, which lasted for three days, making things wet and uncomfortable. Our hatch combings were low and the seas that came aboard would strike them and pour down the hatches until it became necessary to batten down and put on the storm hoods. The captain's gig was taken out of the davits by a large sea and lost overboard.

We proceeded on our way to Madeira, and had fairly good weather. We lay at anchor at Funchal two or three days and then proceeded to Cadiz, Spain, where on our arrival we learned that the Confederate Steamer *Sumter* was anchored under the guns of Gibraltar, guarded by the United States Steamer *Tuscarora*, which was lying at anchor in the port of Algeiras, a Spanish town across the bay from Gibraltar.

We relieved the *Tuscarora* and kept a sharp lookout on the *Sumter* for some months, ready to go out in case she made a move. By laying in Spanish waters we were free to go out without waiting for twenty-four hours after she had departed, which we should have been obliged to do if we lay at Gibraltar in English waters.

We varied the monotony a little by steaming to the town of San Roque, which was nearer Gibraltar, or by taking a little run into the Mediterranean, or in going to Tarrifa and sometimes across to Ceuta and Tangiers in Morocco. These were all short runs and scarcely out of sight of the *Sumter*.

On Sunday, June 13, 1862, while lying at Algeiras, most of the officers having gone to San Eoque to the bull fight, all of our boats

except the dingy were sent ashore to bring them aboard. At half-past six in the afternoon a large fish was seen coming in the bay from the Mediterranean, with its fin projecting some sixteen or eighteen inches above the water. This fish which we all supposed to be a sunfish, came in slowly, and when about a half mile away from the ship on the starboard side, the executive officer who had the deck at the time, called away the dingy, and sent some men with a harpoon after the fish; just as the dingy cleared the side, the fish dove and came up again a little farther from the ship and then showed his flukes and dived deeper.

The dingy had reached the place where the fish went down and the men were laying on their oars waiting for it to come up again. While the boat was pulling away from the ship the men were piped in bathing.

One of the men dived from the bow and commenced swimming towards the boat, but was ordered to return by the officer of the deck. He swam around the bow to the port side where the rest of the men were, some fifty or sixty being in the water at that time.

Soon all hands commenced yelling and shouting that a shark was among them. Going to the port side and looking over, we saw a large shark which had attacked one of the men and had struck him with such force that he was thrown up out of the water. This was the same man that swam out after the dingy.

The shark losing his chance for him, made for another man named Tibbetts, and after quite a struggle missed him, the man swimming for dear life toward the ship, all the others making frantic efforts to reach the side or to get hold of the rope ladders hanging from the boom.

But the shark made another dash for Tibbetts and turning on his side took him under, coming up again not more than twenty feet from the side of the ship, the men threw lines and boards out,

but it was too late, poor Tibbetts' head hung limp and lifeless. Just at this time the dingy came round the bow and the shark went down taking the man in his mouth with him, about four fathoms under water. The water was so clear that they could be seen distinctly, and Tibbetts' body was trailing along side of the shark with his right arm extended up over its shoulder. The men in the dingy could do nothing to save the body or capture the shark at such a distance under water. The shark would have measured from eighteen to twenty feet in length, and belonged to the species commonly known as "Ground Shark."

In the latter part of the summer and in the fall of 1862 we spent considerable time in the Atlantic waters looking out for suspicious vessels and blockade runners, which put in at the Azores Islands and Madeira.

While cruising about the Azores and looking in at the different ports we found some people at Santa Cruz, on the island of Flores, who had been set ashore by the *Alabama* only a short time previous.

The winter of 1862-1863 was spent at La Carraca, Spain, at the Spanish Navy Yard, repairing our stern bearing, which had worn down to such an extent that it was not safe to continue our cruising under steam. It took from the first of December 1862, until the middle of March 1863, to have the work finished, a job that ought not to have taken more than three weeks at the longest, if done in the United States.

About April 1, 1863, Captain Pickering and our executive officer were relieved by Capt. John A. Winslow and Lieut. Commander James S. Thornton. Soon after this change of officers and while lying at anchor in the bay of Horta Fayal, the plan of protecting the engines and boilers with the spare cables hung in bights over the sides, as suggested by Lieut. Commander Thornton, was decided upon; the engineer's department making the iron work and the ship's

carpenter putting them on. After the chain was hung the whole surface was covered with inch boards to prevent the sea from washing it adrift, some parts only being lashed together with marline, the ends and bottom being finished with beveled pieces so as not to reduce our speed. After three days work we had the job completed, and after painting the new wood covering, it was scarcely distinguishable at a short distance.

We sighted a large two smoke pipe steamer off Terceira one noon, and gave chase until about 10 o'clock at night, when we lost sight of her in the dark, having gained about three miles on her during that time, but never ascertained what vessel it was.

On May 12th, we arrived at the town of Ribiera Quente, on the Island of St. Michael. This is the island that has the appearance of a truncated cone at a distance, which is caused by the volcanic mountains and its crater. On our arrival here the captain and four other officers took donkeys with drivers to go to the interior of the island to the crater, about ten miles from shore. We spent two hours in reaching the crater, where we stopped over night.

During the ascent we passed over the edges of precipices in foot-paths not wide enough for two to pass, and could sit on our donkeys' backs and look to a depth which appeared to be straight down the mouth of the crater thousands of feet. We arrived in the latter part of the afternoon, had our supper and retired early to bed. In the morning we were up at day-break, took our hot sulfur baths and then had breakfast. Our hotel or stopping place was in the crater, and there were boiling springs issuing from the crevices of the pumice rock in every direction, throwing out clouds of vapor and steam, which were visible for miles.

Later, while lying at Fayal, an English blockade runner, the *Juno*, came into port for coal, but not having proper clearance papers was not allowed to take any aboard, whereupon she started for the Island of Terceira, about ninety

miles distant. As soon as she was underway we hoisted anchor; and when it was clear of the bottom started after her at full speed, that is, at as full speed as we could make, with the anchor and five fathoms of chain dragging after us, which we did not stop to heave in. We fired a shot at her but it fell short and she drew out of sight at night. We found her lying at anchor in the harbor of Terceira on our arrival there in the morning, when her captain came on board our ship, and demanded why we had chased and fired a shot at his vessel. Captain Winslow informed him that it was for him to heave to, and that he should follow him out when he departed.

Captain Taylor of the *Juno* said he should go out in broad daylight and we might catch him if we could. He evidently was not aware of our dragging the anchor. We arranged our cable with a buoy ready to slip anchor at a moment's notice, and lay under steam for two days, when at about noon time we saw that preparations were being made for her to depart, and it was not long before she got underway and kicked up a tremendous fuss with her paddle wheels. We slipped our cable and started after her. Everything was so completely ready in the engine and fire room that the boilers were making steam rapidly, a vacuum had been formed in the condenser; the engines had been moved by hand and the steam used in every possible way to prevent it from blowing up at the escape pipe. We had been under way but a few minutes when Thornton came to the engine room hatch and gave the order to slow down, saying we should run over her before she got out of the harbor. She dodged in and out among the rocks, when finally she went between two large ones, making a short cut around the island where there was just room enough for her to pass, but not enough for us.

As she went through the captain of the *Juno* bid us good-bye, and waved his hat at us as a farewell. —We kept outside, and about five o'clock came up with her clear of the island.

We fired a shot for her to heave to; she stopped, and we sent an officer aboard to examine her papers which were not satisfactory, then a crew was sent aboard to take possession of and to search her; remaining all night; but being unable to find anything contraband, as we had no way of getting the freight and coal out of her in mid ocean, we took her to off the port of Fayal, and after consultation with the American Consul she was allowed to depart.

You never saw an angrier man than Captain Taylor, when we boarded his vessel. He looked as if he would explode. His face was quite flushed, probably owing to the brandy he had aboard. We afterwards heard of her capture going out of Wilmington, North Carolina.

The *Kearsarge* was a fast steamer for those days, and had made an average of thirteen and a half knots with moderate head wind and sea from daylight until 10 o'clock at night during a chase.

On Sept. 7, 1863, we left Madeira for the English channel; touching at Lisbon, Portugal, and Ferrol, Spain. Here we heard that the Confederate Steamer *Florida* was at Brest, France. We immediately proceeded there looking in at Bordeaux, where two ironclad rams were being built for the Confederates.

We found the *Florida* at Brest, where we remained off and on for about five months. The *Florida* was a two smoke pipe steamer, a little smaller than the *Alabama*, and carried eight rifled guns.

October 30th we heard that the *Georgia* was off the coast of Ireland. We proceeded to Queenstown in a very severe gale, but found that she had gone to Cherbourg. Back again we went to Brest to continue our watch on the *Florida*.

December 5th we started for Queenstown again, this time to land some stowaways that had come aboard when there before.

These stowaways were the cause of considerable diplomatic correspondence, and we returned them to their native soil as soon as we

dared to leave the *Florida*.

In the last part of January 1861, being out of coals and stores, we were obliged to go to Cadiz to replenish, and returned on the 18th of February to find that the *Florida* had departed in our absence. Rather a difficult task for one vessel to blockade four or five of the enemy's cruisers, from one to six hundred miles apart.

In the English Channel we performed considerable police duty visiting ports in England, Ireland, France, Belgium and Holland, looking after the Rappahannock, Georgia, and other vessels fitting out for the Confederate Government as fast as we heard of their whereabouts.

When going into the port of Ostend, Belgium, under the charge of a pilot, through his stupidity, we were run on the pier, a massive granite structure, and there we hung for twelve hours before we could get off. We at first thought it premeditated, but finally came to the conclusion that it was through his ignorance. We came off with only the loss of a few sheets of copper from our bottom. After laying at Ostend a few days we proceeded to Flushing, Holland, and went into the dry dock and made repairs.

In order to realize what a scourge the *Alabama* was to American commerce, I will proceed to follow her destructive course from her departure from England.

In October, 1861, the Confederate agents in England made a contract with the Lairds of Liverpool to build a war vessel. In May 1862, the vessel was launched and called the 290, this being the 290th vessel built by that firm. She cost \$255,000.00.

On July 28th, 1862, the 290 was finished and sailed from Birkenhead out of the Mersey River, ostensibly for a trial trip, with a large party of ladies and gentlemen aboard.

After getting out into the Channel a tug met her, took off the guests and landed them on shore, while the 290 proceeded on her voyage, passing around the North coast of Ireland and

then set her course for the Island of Terceira, one of the Azores, where she arrived on the 10th of August. On the 18th of August the English Barque, *Aggrippina* arrived, having on board guns, ammunition, coal, stores, etc., for her, which were transferred aboard. On the 28th the English steamer *Bahama* arrived with Capt. Raphael Semmes and other officers of the Confederate Navy. More guns and stores were transferred from her to the 290. On Sunday, August 24th, the 290 was put into commission and named the *Alabama* by the authority of the so-called Confederate States Government.

About eighty men were shipped from the three vessels and formed the nucleus of the crew until others could be found that were willing to ship and sign the articles. The *Alabama* was built for great speed and had a hoisting propeller, so that under sail alone she could cruise about, thus economizing fuel, which was a very important item with her.

On September 5th, the eleventh day after going into commission, the *Alabama* captured her first prize, the *Ocmulgee*, a whaling ship, which she burned.

Cruising about the Azores for some days, her course was shaped towards New York, capturing twenty vessels, the *Starlight*, *Ocean Hover*, *Alert*, *Weather Gage*, *Altamaha*, *Benjamin Tucker*, *Courser*, *Virginia*, *Elisha Dunbar*, *Brilliant*, *Emily Farnham*, *Dunkirk*, *Wave Crest*, *Tonawanda*, *Manchester*, *Lamplighter*, *Lafayette*, *Crenshaw*, *Lauretta*, and *Baron de Oastine*. Then steering in a southerly direction towards Martinique, she captured the *Levi Starbuck* and the *T. B. Wales*, arriving there November 18th.

She was here blockaded by the U. S. Steamer *San Jacinto*, but escaped out of the harbor at night of the 19th, the next day. She went from Martinique to the southward to the island of Blanquilla, arriving on the 21st, where she met her store ship the *Aggrippina*, and took coal and stores from her.

After coaling and taking stores she headed northward, going through the Mona Passage to the north of Hayti, capturing two more vessels, the *Parker Cook* and the *Union*. Passing through the Windward Passage, she captured and ransomed the Pacific Mail Steamer *Ariel* from New York to Aspinwall.

Then after laying in the track of the mail steamers for a few days she went to the Areas Rocks where she took more coal from the *Aggrippina*, which was there waiting for her—finished taking coal on January 5, 1863, and hoisted anchor.

From the mail captured on the *Ariel* Semmes got the information that an expedition was to leave New York to make an attack on Galveston, Texas. Semmes had calculated the time for the arrival of the fleet at Galveston and was intending to surprise them in the night while laying at anchor, and steam through the fleet pouring in shot and shell from both batteries as he went. But on Sunday, January 11th, when he approached the anchorage, instead of finding the transports there, five vessels of war were made out. Soon one of them was reported to be standing out towards the *Alabama*, and after dark came up with her. Answering her hail, the *Alabama* replied, "Her Britannic Majesty's Steamer, *Petrel*. What vessel is that?" And the answer came back, "The United States Steamer *Hatteras*" At the same moment Semmes replied, "This is the Confederate Steamer *Alabama*", and before the *Hatteras* had fully heard, a broadside from the *Alabama*'s starboard battery was given her at a distance of only fifty or sixty yards.

After twelve or fifteen minutes rapid firing from both vessels, the *Hatteras* was reported to be sinking, and the firing ceased. Semmes lowered his boats, and soon after the *Hatteras* went down stern first.

Semmes took the officers and crew aboard the *Alabama* and paroled them at Port Royal, Jamaica. The *Hatteras*, commanded by Lieut. Commander Blake, was a small, iron side-wheel

gunboat, formerly a merchant vessel, and carried a very light battery.

After repairing and coaling ship at Port Royal, the *Alabama* proceeded to the eastward in the track of vessels bound to and from the East Indies and the Pacific, and the United States, capturing seven vessels, the *Golden Rule*, *Chatelaine*, *Palmetto*, *Olive Jane*, *Golden Eagle*, *Washington* and *Bethia Thailor*.

She then headed in a southerly direction and along the coast of Brazil, touching at Fernando de Noronha, capturing the *John A. Parks*, *Punjaub*, *Morning Star*, *Kingfisher*, *Charles Hill*, *Nora*, and the *Louisa Hatch*, which was loaded with 1,000 ton of coal. This was a very fortunate capture for the *Alabama*, as she was short of fuel.

Semmes had ordered the *Agrippina* to meet him here so that he might fill up with coal and stores, but he decided to hold on to the *Hatch* until he made sure that the *Agrippina* had arrived. On entering the harbor he did not find the *Agrippina* and had the *Hatch* brought in, hauled alongside, and filled his bunkers from her.

Just after finishing taking coal, two American vessels were sighted in the offing. The *Alabama* got up steam and went out to them. They proved to be two whalers, the *Lafayette* and the *Kate Oorey*. The *Lafayette* was burned and the *Kate Oorey* brought into anchor.

Semmes waited a few days longer for the *Agrippina*, but not arriving, he went out taking the *Hatch* and *Corey* with him, and burnt them off the island.

On her way from here to Bahia, she captured the *Nye*, *Dorcas-Prince*, *Union Jack* and *Sea Lark*.

After leaving Bahia, she proceeded in a northeasterly direction, capturing the *Gildersleeve*, then headed south to a little south of Rio de Janeiro, capturing the *Justina*, *Jabez Snow*, *Amazonian*, *Talisman* and the barque *Conrad*, (which they commissioned *Tuscaloosa*,

and officered as a tender to the *Alabama*) and the *Anna F. Schmidt*.

From here her course was set to the eastward for the Cape of Good Hope, capturing the *Express*. On July 29th, she anchored in Saldanha Bay, after remaining here one week, put to sea, and captured the bark *Sea Bride*.

She next went to Table Bay, and then to Simons Bay, where she captured in sight of the town as she went in a bark named the *Martha Wemell*, it was finally decided this prize was inside the three mile line and she was released.

On the 28th of August, anchored at Angra Piquina, where the prize *Sea Bride* was sold. It was about September 25th when the *Alabama* left the cape for a cruise still farther to the eastward.

After steering south for a short distance her course was set for the Straits of Sunda, by the way of St. Paul's Island. At the entrance of the straits she captured the *Amanda*, and after passing through captured the *Winged Racer* and *Contest*. She sailed as far as the Island of Pulo Condor in Siam, and arrived at Singapore on December 21, 1863. In going through the Straits of Malacca she captured the *Martaban*, *Highlander* and *Sonora*, and off the coast of India the *Emma Jane*.

Passing westward toward the coast of Africa she passed through the Mozambique Channel to the Cape of Good Hope, thence up towards St Helena, west, to off the coast of Brazil, then northerly, capturing the *Rockingham* April 23rd, and the *Tycoon* on April 27th. She continued her course to the northward, passed the Azores, then to the northeast for the English Channel, and on the 11th day of June 1864, arrived at Cherbourg, France, having cruised less than two years.

Of the sixty-six vessels captured by the *Alabama*, fifty-two were burned, ten released on bond, the *Hatteras* sunk in action, the *Conrad*, named the *Tuscaloosa*, and commissioned a Confederate cruiser, or tender to the *Alabama*; one sold and one released as an unlawful

capture.

The damage inflicted on American shipping by the Confederate cruisers, which were allowed to be fitted out in England, cost the English Government fifteen million, five hundred thousand dollars (\$15,500,000.00), which was paid to the United States in settlement of the so-called *Alabama* claims.

On Sunday afternoon, June 12, 1864, while the *Kearsarge* was at anchor in the Scheldt, off Flushing, Holland, a gun was fired from aboard, and the signal for everybody belonging to the ship to return was hoisted, orders were given to spread the fires and get up steam preparatory to getting under way. The anchor was hoisted and we proceeded to sea, when the captain called all hands to muster on the quarter deck, and informed them that he had received a telegram from Mr. Dayton, the American Minister at Paris, that the *Alabama* was in the harbor of Cherbourg, France, where we were going, and he hoped to have the opportunity of meeting her and be able to capture or destroy her.

This information was received with three rousing cheers from the crew, and the men's eyes glistened with excitement and animation at the prospect of having an opportunity to show what they were made of. They were all eager for the fray.

On the way to Cherbourg the crew were occupied in getting swords and cutlasses sharp, and ready for action. The grind-stones were in constant use. On the 14th of June we steamed into the harbor of Cherbourg at the eastern entrance, taking a good look at the *Alabama* as she lay at anchor. We then proceeded out at the western passage without anchoring, laying off and on outside the breakwater, keeping a sharp lookout, and waiting for her to come out. This was kept up for five days, drilling at guns and seeing that everything was in working order. On Sunday, June 19th, at 10.20 A. M., all hands being at muster on the quarterdeck, the captain reading the church service; the lookout on the

foretopsail yard reported to the officer of the deck that the *Alabama* was coming out. The captain took the trumpet and called all hands to quarters, and ordered the ship cleared for action.

Orders came to the engine room to start all the fires (we had been running under half steam) and to be prepared for action. Our bow was turned away from the shore and we steamed out toward the middle of the English Channel, so that the engagement should take place outside of the three mile limit, and also that the *Alabama* might not be able to run in shore in case she attempted to get away.

The *Alabama* was convoyed to the distance of three miles from shore by the French iron clad frigate, *La Ouronne*. The *Alabama* continued her course out, and the French frigate returned in shore.

After Winslow was satisfied that the *Alabama* was well outside of French waters, the *Kearsarge* was put about and headed straight for her.

At a very long range the *Alabama* commenced firing, thinking that she might do us some damage by raking shot, but they mostly fell short or went clear of us, some passing over.

As we approached her we sheared off, giving her a broadside from our starboard battery at a distance of about one thousand yards, intending to run under her stern and rake her, but perceiving our intention, Semmes wisely kept his broadside to us, using his starboard battery. The tide was setting to the westward and our maneuvering commencing a little to the eastward of the harbor on a circle, each vessel being on opposite sides, the engagement took place in panoramic form, directly in front of Cherbourg, about six miles distant, in plain view of thousands of people that had come to witness the fight; it having been reported in Paris Saturday evening that we were to meet on Sunday morning. The engagement lasted one hour and two minutes, each vessel using their starboard battery and moving in a circle, both

around a common centre.

During the early part of the fight it did not seem to Captain Winslow that our shot or shell were doing much damage, and he decided to fight her at closer quarters. We shortened the distance between us, and could see by the confusion on her deck that we had not wasted our ammunition.

After an hour's fighting the *Alabama* attempted to set sail and run in shore, the order of four bells (ahead fast) was given to the engine room; we forged ahead, and were in a position to rake her fore and aft, but she was too far gone, and had commenced to settle when she hauled down her colors and soon showed a white flag over her stern, and sent a boat alongside of us and surrendered. She was now about five miles from shore.

When we brought her port side in view, we saw that where our shell had made only small holes in entering, then on exploding within they had opened large gaps in her side. Then the *Alabama* sank, going down stern first, with her bow high in the air, leaving their crew struggling in the water. The *Deerhound*, an English steam yacht, which had been lying at a safe distance in shore, steamed under our stern, and Captain Winslow requested her commander to assist him in saving the crew, as most of our boats were disabled; we had only two boats that would float, and they were sent to pick up the men. While they were thus engaged it was observed by the officers of our vessel that the *Deerhound* was steaming towards the English coast, and evidently going away with our prisoners. Permission was asked by some of the officers to heave her to, but the captain refused, saying that the commander of an English yacht would not do such a thing as to carry the men away, but was only steaming about and would return with the prisoners to our ship; but it was not so. She went off with Semmes and a number of the officers and crew, and landed them in Southampton, England.

I will say that our boat's crews were out, and that it might have been possible that the rescued men would have overpowered them; and it would certainly have been a very grave error to have followed the yacht and left the men under such circumstances.

After we had picked up all the men we could find in the water, and had taken them from one of the French pilot boats that had brought them alongside, making in all seventy men and officers, we steamed into the harbor of Cherbourg and came to anchor.

The captain sent an officer ashore to visit the admiral of the port, to obtain permission to land the prisoners on parole, and also to be permitted to send the wounded of both vessels to the Marine Hospital, which was granted.

Virtually, the *Alabama* was an English ship, with English guns, manned by an English crew, sunk in the English Channel, and Semmes and other officers were run away with by an English yacht.

During the engagement a one hundred and ten pound rifle shell entered the bulwarks and exploded, wounding three of our after pivot gun's crew; but everybody was working with such coolness and precision that no more notice was taken of the casualty than to have them taken below to the surgeon on the berth deck for medical attendance.

We were struck twenty-eight times in hull and rigging, which caused the following damages: A one hundred and ten-pound rifle shell struck the roof of the engine house, cutting it completely through and across, knocking the splinters and glass in all directions into the engine room below, and it became necessary to set the men to sweeping them up to prevent them from getting into the machinery.

A shell entered the smoke pipe and exploded

inside, tearing out a space on the port side about three feet in diameter, cutting a boat hanging on the davits full of small holes with the fragments.

Another one hundred and ten-pound shell struck a glancing blow under the counter and deflecting, entered the rudder post and remained there, but did not explode; nor did it jam the rudder so that it could not be used; situated as this shell was, it would have done us very serious damage had it exploded.

One shot carried away the starboard life buoy.

Three thirty-two-pound shots went through the port bulwarks forward of mizzen mast.

A shell exploded at after end of our after pivot gun port. Another shell exploded at after end of chain plating. Two shot struck below plank sheer, abreast of boiler room hatch, one in plank sheer of forward pivot gun port, one forward of fore rigging, two through port quarter boat, and also a number striking in the shrouds and rigging doing more or less damage.

Before we went into the fight an American flag was sent to the main truck in a stop; towards the end of the fight one of the *Alabama's* shot struck the halyards, and breaking the stop let the flag loose to the breeze; this was considered a very good omen by our old salts.

The crew of each vessel was as follows: *Kearsarge*, one hundred and sixty-three, all told; the *Alabama*, about the same number, as near as could be ascertained at the time, although her crew had numbered as high as one hundred and seventy a short time before.

The *Alabama* had been in Cherbourg a week preparing, and had taken aboard three hundred and fifty tons of coal, which brought her down in the water; while the *Kearsarge* had only one hundred and seventy tons aboard, making her very high out of water.

The size of the two vessels was as follows: —

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <i>Alabama</i> | Keasarge |
| Length of keel.....210 feet | Length of keel.....199 feet |
| Beam.....32 “ | Beam.....83 “ |
| Depth.....17 “ | Depth.....16 “ |
| Tonnage.....1040 | Tonnage.....1031 |

Armament —

| | |
|--|--|
| <i>Keasarge</i>4 short 32s 2 11-inch smooth bores 1 30-pound rifle Total.....7 guns | <i>Alabama</i> ...1 7-inch Blakely rifle, 110 pounds 1 8-inch smooth bore 6 long 32s Total.....8 guns |
|--|--|

The total number of shot and shell fired by the *Keasarge* was one hundred and seventy-three, while it was stated that the *Alabama* fired about three hundred and seventy.

The repairs were all made by our own men, and we continued cruising in the English Channel.

During the war the services performed by the navy were of the greatest value. Thirty five hundred miles of seacoast were effectually blockaded, besides the patrolling of the rivers, bayous and other inland waters.

Its engagements with Confederate vessels, forts and coast defenses were many and successful.

In the Mississippi, Tennessee, Red, Cumberland and other rivers, the navy was continually performing active service, encountering batteries, sharpshooters, torpedoes and obstructions of all sorts, requiring constant vigilance, and causing great hardships night and day. The value of the assistance rendered the army by the navy was incalculable, and its presence was a necessity in most of the important movements, the enemy always keeping a respectful distance on the approach of a gunboat.

Thousands of heroic deeds were performed,

and hundreds of brave men lost their lives in the performance of their perilous duties aboard ship and on shore.

The decisive work of the navy during the war of the Rebellion made the success of the North possible; and while a nation is bestowing encomiums upon the soldier, the sailor should certainly receive his full share.

Life aboard ship is rather monotonous. The officers and crew, each and all, have their regular routine duty when at sea and when in port. At sea the deck officers and the engineers have their four hours on duty and eight hours off. While the crew have watch and watch, or four hours on and four hours off. Night and day, stormy or pleasant, hot or cold, it makes no difference, except in very severe storms, when all hands are on duty until it abates.

At anchor things are different; then an anchor watch is set of only a few men, while the rest are turned in. The officers have day's duty, that is from 8 A. M. to 8 P. M. every third day and one watch of four hours each night. This is the time the officers have a round of gaiety, receiving invitations to receptions, balls, dinners, theatres, bull fights, etc., according to the country they may be in. Then entertainments in return are given aboard ship, such as dinners, dances, minstrel shows, etc., which the guests

seem to enjoy very much.

The officers also make journeys into the interior, often for a week or more at a time, this depending of course on the duty the ship is performing. For instance while the *Kearsarge* was undergoing repairs at La Carracca Navy Yard, in Spain, I visited Jerez (or Sherry as we call it), where the famous Sherry wine is made, Sevilla, Madrid, Santa Maria, Cadiz, Gibraltar and other interesting places. I also visited Paris and London when our ship was in France and England, and Bruges, Middleburg, Antwerp and Cologne while in Belgium and Holland.

This is the pleasant side and quite different from blockading the *Sumter* at Gibraltar, chasing blockade runners at the Azores, or watching the *Florida* at Brest, RappahannocJc at Calais, and cruising in the English Channel and Bay of Biscay all winter on the qui vive for anything that may occur either night or day, with steam up when at anchor, and everything kept in readiness to get under way and go at a moment's notice whenever our presence was required, encountering terrific gales, lasting some times two or three days, and liable at any moment to mishaps while cruising near shore.

In the latter part of August we started on our way home, stopping at Fayal. Then running due south to the St. Paul rocks, which are situated about two degrees north and almost in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, without any light or beacon, in fact nothing to mark their location.

We landed here with a boat while the *Kearsarge* lay off at a short distance, and found that they were comprised of two or three

NOTE.

On Feb. 2, 1894, at about 7 o'clock P. M., the *Kearsarge*, while on her way from Port au Prince to Bluefields, Nicaragua, to protect American interests, was run on to Roncador Reef, situated in the Caribbean Sea, Lat. N. 13°

perfectly barren rocks of a few acres in extent and about twenty or thirty feet high, inhabited only by sea fowl, which were on their nests attending to their parental duties.

We proceeded to the southward to the Island of Fernando de Noronha, a penal settlement belonging to Brazil and then to off Pernambuco, northwest to Barbados. While laying here two steamers were sighted in the offing showing the American colors.

We proceeded out of the harbor and found the United States Steamer *Wachusett* on her way to the United States with the Confederate Steamer *Florida*, which she had captured by boarding, and taken out of the harbor of Bahin, we relieved her of part of the *Florida's* crew and brought them home with us.

From there we went to St. Thomas, our last port before reaching Boston, where we arrived on Nov. 7, 1864, at about 1 A. M. We were given a reception and banquet by the city government in Faneuil Hall, it being the second time its doors had been thrown open for a like occasion. The first was in 1812, when Captain Hull commanding the frigate *Constitution* came into Boston harbor with the crew captured from the English frigate *Guerriere*, which she had destroyed in an engagement on the high seas.

We were banquetted at the Revere House by the merchants of Boston, receiving a most enthusiastic welcome from all. In a few days the crew were discharged, and the officers were detached, finishing the cruise of one of the most famous of American naval steamers.

34' 30", Long. 80° 5' 39" W., a very low and treacherous coral formation in almost a direct line between the two ports. The Court of Inquiry has convened, and in a short time the cause of her sad fate will be known.

—W[illiam]. H. B[adlam].
FEB. 26, 1894.

NOTE—The annual meeting of the Rhode Island Soldiers' and Sailors' Historical Society occurred in January last. A feature of special interest was the reading of a paper by William H. Bedlam, the late second assistant engineer, United States navy, on "the Cruise of the *Kearsarge* and her fight with the *Alabama*." During this engagement Mr. Bedlam was in charge of the engines, his chief being ill. In reply to a question as to the alleged firing of the *Kearsarge* into the *Alabama* after she surrendered, Mr. Bedlam said that being at his post, he could not, of course, see what transpired

outside the vessel, but he always understood that as the latter vessel swung around, after her flag was struck, the battery on the opposite side was brought to bear on the *Kearsarge*. The two guns changed to be loaded and were fired by the sailors. Captain Winslow at once concluded he was a victim of trickery, and three broadsides were returned before a white flag could be displayed by the rebel cruise.

("Notes from the Historical Societies," *Magazine of American History with Notes and Queries*, 29 (January-June 1893), p. 292.)