

“The Duel Between the ‘Alabama’ and the Kearsarge,”
by the Surgeon of the “Kearsarge.” [John M. Browne]
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On Sunday, the 12th of June, 1864, the *Kearsarge*, Captain John A. Winslow, was lying at anchor in the Scheldt, off Flushing, Holland. The cornet suddenly appeared at the fore, and a gun was fired. These were unexpected signals that compelled absent officers and men to return to the ship. Steam was raised, and as soon as we were off, and all hands called, Captain Winslow gave the welcome news of a telegram from Mr. Dayton, our minister to France, announcing that the *Alabama* had arrived the day previous at Cherbourg; hence, the urgency of departure, the probability of an encounter, and the expectation of her capture or destruction. The crew responded with cheers. The succeeding day witnessed the arrival of the *Kearsarge* at Dover, for dispatches; and the day after (Tuesday) her appearance off Cherbourg, where we saw the Confederate flag flying within the breakwater. Approaching nearer, officers and men gathered in groups on deck and looked intently at the “daring rover,” that had been able for two years to escape numerous foes and to inflict immense damage on our commerce. She was a beautiful specimen of naval architecture. The surgeon went on shore and obtained pratique (permission to visit the port) for boats. Owing to the neutrality limitation which would not allow us to remain in the harbor longer than twenty-four hours, it was inexpedient to enter the port. We placed a vigilant watch by turns at each of the harbor entrances, and continued it to the moment of the engagement.

On Wednesday Captain Winslow paid an official visit to the French admiral commanding the maritime district, and to the U. S. commercial agent, bringing on his return the unanticipated news that Captain Semmes had declared his intention to fight. At first the assertion was barely credited, the policy of the *Alabama* being regarded as opposed to a conflict, and to escape rather than to be exposed to injury, perhaps destruction; but the doubters were half-convinced when the so-called challenge was known to read as follows:

“C. S. S. ‘Alabama,’ CHERBOURG, JUNE 14, 1864.

“TO A. BONFILS, Esq., CHERBOURG.

“SIR: I hear that you were informed by the U. S. Consul that the *Kearsarge* was to come to this port solely for the prisoners landed by me, and that she was to depart in twenty-four hours. I desire you to say to the U. S. Consul that my intention is to fight the *Kearsarge* as soon as I can make the necessary arrangements. I hope these will not detain me more

than until to-morrow evening, or after the morrow morning at farthest. I beg she will not depart before I am ready to go out

I have the honor to be very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. SEMMES, Captain.”

This communication was sent by Mr. Bonfils, the Confederate States commercial agent, to Mr. Liais, the United States commercial agent, with a request that the latter would furnish a copy to Captain Winslow for his guidance. There was no other challenge to combat. The letter that passed between the commercial agents was the challenge about which so much has been said. Captain Semmes informed Captain Winslow through Mr. Bonfils of his intention to fight; Captain Winslow informed Captain Semmes through Mr. Liais that he came to Cherbourg to fight, and had no intention of leaving. He made no other reply.

Captain Winslow assembled the officers and discussed the expected battle. It was probable the two ships would engage on parallel lines, and the *Alabama* would seek neutral waters in the event of a defeat, hence the necessity of beginning the action several miles from the breakwater. It was determined not to surrender, but to fight until the last, and, if need be, to go down with colors flying. Why Captain Semmes should imperil his ship was not understood, since he would risk all, and expose the cause of which he was a selected champion to a needless disaster, while the *Kearsarge*, if taken or destroyed, could be replaced. It was therefore concluded he would fight because he thought he should be the victor.

Preparations were made for battle, with no relaxation of the watch. Thursday passed; Friday came; the *Kearsarge* waited with ports down, guns pivoted to starboard, the whole battery loaded, and shell, grape and canister ready to use in any mode of attack or defense; yet no *Alabama* appeared. French pilots came on board and told of unusual arrangements made by the enemy, such as the hurried taking of coals, the transmission of valuable articles to the shore, such as captured chronometers, specie, and the bills of ransomed vessels; and the sharpening of swords, cutlasses, and boarding-pikes. It was reported that Captain Semmes had been advised not to give battle. He replied he would prove to the world that his ship was not a privateer, intended only for attack upon merchant vessels, but a true man-of-war; further he had consulted French officers who all asserted that in his

situation they would fight. Certain newspapers declared that he ought to improve the opportunity afforded by the presence of the enemy to show that his ship was not a "corsair" to prey upon defenseless merchantmen, but a real ship-of-war, able and willing to fight the "Federal" waiting outside the harbor. It was said the *Alabama* was swift, with a superior crew, and it was known that the ship, guns, and ammunition were of English make.

A surprise by night was suggested, and precautionary means were taken; everything was well planned and ready for action, but still no *Alabama* came. Meanwhile the *Kearsarge* was cruising to and fro off the breakwater. A message was brought from Mr. Dayton, our minister at Paris, by his son, who with difficulty had obtained permission from the French admiral to visit the *Kearsarge*. Communication with either ship was prohibited, but the permission was given upon the promise of Mr. Dayton to return ashore directly after the delivery of the message. Mr. Dayton expressed the opinion that Captain Semmes would not fight, though acknowledging the prevalence of a contrary belief in Cherbourg. He was told that in the event of battle, if we were successful, the colors would be displayed at the mizzen, as the flag of victory. He went on shore with the intention of leaving for Paris without delay. In taking leave of the French admiral, the latter advised Mr. Dayton to remain over night, and mentioned the fixed purpose of Captain Semmes to fight on the following day, Sunday; and he gave the intelligence that there could be no further communication with the *Kearsarge*. Mr. Dayton passed a part of Saturday night trying to procure a boat to send off the acquired information, but the vigilance along the coast made his efforts useless; He remained, witnessed the battle, telegraphed the results and was one of the first to go on board and offer congratulations.

At a supper in Cherbourg on Saturday night, several officers of the *Alabama* met sympathizing friends, the coming battle being the chief topic of conversation. Confident of victory, they proclaimed the intent to sink the "Federal" or gain a "corsair." They rose with promises to meet the following night to repeat the festivity as victors, were escorted to the boat, and separated with cheers and best wishes for a successful return.¹

Sunday the 19th came; a fine day, atmosphere somewhat hazy, little sea, light westerly wind. At ten o'clock the *Kearsarge* was near the buoy marking the line of shoals to the eastward of Cherbourg, at a distance of about three miles from the entrance. The decks had been holystoned, the bright work cleaned, the guns polished,

and the crew were dressed in Sunday suit. They were inspected at quarters and dismissed to attend divine service. Seemingly no one thought of the enemy; so long awaited and not appearing, speculation as to her coming had nearly ceased. At 10:20 the officer of the deck reported a steamer approaching from Cherbourg, a frequent occurrence, and consequently it created no surprise. The bell was tolling for service when some one shouted, "She's coming, and heading straight for us!" Soon, by the aid of a glass, the officer of the deck made out the enemy and shouted, "The *Alabama*!" and calling down the ward-room hatch repeated the cry, "The *Alabama*!" The drum beat to general quarters; Captain Winslow put aside the prayer-book, seized the trumpet, ordered the ship about and headed seaward. The ship was cleared for action, with the battery pivoted to starboard.

The *Alabama* approached from the western entrance, escorted by the French iron-clad frigate *Couronne*, flying the pennant of the commandant of the port, followed in her wake by a small fore-and-aft-rigged steamer, the *Deerhound*, flying the flag of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club. The commander of the frigate had informed Captain Semmes that his ship would escort him to the limit of the French waters. The frigate having convoyed the *Alabama* three marine miles from the coast, put down her helm and steamed back into port without delay. The steam-yacht continued on, and remained near the scene of action.

Captain Winslow had assured the French admiral that in the event of an engagement the position of the ship should be far enough from shore to prevent a violation of the law of nations. To avoid a question of jurisdiction and to avert an escape to neutral waters in case of retreat, the *Kearsarge* steamed to sea, followed by the enemy, giving the appearance of running away and being pursued. Between six and seven miles from the shore the *Kearsarge*, thoroughly ready, at 10:50 wheeled, at a distance of one and a quarter miles from her opponent, presented the starboard battery, and steered directly for her with design to close, or to run her down. The *Alabama* sheered and presented the starboard battery. Store speed was ordered, the *Kearsarge* advanced rapidly and at 10:57 received a broadside of solid shot at a range of about eighteen hundred yards. This broadside cut away a little of the rigging but the shot mostly passed over or fell short. It was apparent that Captain Semmes intended to fight at long range.

The *Kearsarge* advanced with increased speed, receiving a second and part of a third broadside, with similar effect. Captain Winslow wished to get at short range, as the guns were loaded with five-second shell. Arrived within nine hundred yards, the *Kearsarge*, fearing a fourth broadside with apprehended racing results, sheered, and broke her silence with the starboard battery.

¹This incident, and others pertaining to the *Alabama*, were told the writer by the officers who were taken prisoners. J. M. B.

Each ship was now pressed under a full head of steam, the position being broadside and broadside, both employing the starboard guns.

Captain Winslow, fearful that the enemy would make for the shore, determined with a port helm to run under the *Alabama*'s stern for raking, but was prevented by her sheering and keeping her broadside to the *Kearsarge*, which forced the fighting on a circular track each ship, with a strong port helm, steaming around a common center, front a quarter to half a mile apart, and pouring its fire into its opponent. There was a current setting to westward three knots an hour.

The action was now fairly begun. The *Alabama* changed from solid shot to shell. A shot from an early broadside of the *Kearsarge* carried away the spanker-gaff of the enemy, and caused his ensign to come down by the run. This incident was regarded as a favorable omen by the men, who cheered and went with increased confidence to their work. The fallen ensign reappeared at the mizzen. The *Alabama* returned to solid shot, and soon after fired both shot and shell to the end. The firing of the *Alabama* was rapid and wild, getting better near the close; that of the *Kearsarge* was deliberate, accurate, and almost from the beginning productive of dismay, destruction, and death.² The *Kearsarge* gunners had been cautioned against firing without direct aim, and had been advised to point the heavy guns below rather than above the water-line and to clear the deck of the enemy with the fighter ones. Though subjected to an incessant storm of shot and shell, they kept their stations and obeyed instructions.

The effect upon the enemy was readily perceived, and nothing could restrain the enthusiasm of our men. Cheer succeeded cheer; caps were thrown in the air or overboard; jackets were discarded; sanguine of victory, the men were shouting as each projectile took effect: "That is a good one!" "Down, boys!" "Give her another like the last!" "Now we have her!" and so on, cheering and shouting to the end.

After exposure to an uninterrupted cannonade for eighteen minutes. without casualties, a sixty-eight-pounder Blakely shell passed through the starboard bulwarks below the main rigging, exploded upon the quarter-deck, and wounded three .of the crew of the after pivot-gun. With these exceptions, not an officer or man received serious injury. The three unfortunates were speedily taken below, and so quietly was the act done, that at the termination of

²Captain Semmes in his official report says: "The firing now became very hot, and the enemy's shot and shell soon began to tell upon our hull, knocking dozen, killing, and disabling a number of men in different parts of the ship."—J. M. B.

the fight a large number of the men were unaware that any of their comrades were wounded. Two shots entered the ports occupied by the thirty-twos, where several men were stationed, one taking effect in the hammock-netting, the other going through the opposite port, yet none were hit. A shell exploded in the hammock-netting and set the ship on fire; the alarm calling for fire-quarters was sounded, and men detailed for such an emergency put out the fire, while the rest staid at the guns.

It is wonderful that so few casualties occurred on board the *Kearsarge*, considering the number on the *Alabama*—the former having fired one hundred and seventy-three shot and shell, and the latter nearly double that number. The *Kearsarge* concentrated her fire and poured in the eleven-inch shells with deadly effect. One penetrated the coal-bunker of the *Alabama*, and a dense cloud of coal-dust arose. Others struck near the water-line between the main and mizzen masts, exploded within board, or passing through burst beyond. Crippled and torn, the *Alabama* moved less quickly and began to settle by the stern, yet did not slacken her fire, but returned successive broadsides without disastrous result to us.

Captain Semmes witnessed the havoc made by the shells, especially by those of our after pivot-gun, and offered a reward for its silence. Soon his battery was turned upon this particular offending gun for the purpose of silencing it. It was in vain, for the work of destruction went on. We had completed the seventh rotation on the circular track and begun the eighth; the *Alabama*, now settling sought to escape by setting all available sail (fore-trysail and two jibs), left the circle, amid a shower of shot and shell, and headed for the French waters; but to no purpose. In winding the *Alabama* presented the port batters with only two guns bearing, and showed gaping sides through which the water washed. The *Kearsarge* pursued, keeping on a line nearer the shore, and with a few well-directed shots hastened the sinking condition. Then the *Alabama* was at our mercy. Her colors were struck and the *Kearsarge* ceased firing. Two of the junior officers, so I was told by our prisoners, swore they would never surrender, and in a mutinous spirit rushed: to the two port guns and opened fire on the *Kearsarge*. Captain Winslow, amazed at this extraordinary conduct of an enemy who had hauled down his flag in token of surrender, exclaimed, "He is playing us a trick; give him another broadside." Again the shot and shell went crashing through her sides, and the *Alabama* continued to settle by the stern. The *Kearsarge* was laid across her bows for raking, and in position to use grape and canister.

Over the stern of the *Alabama* a white flag was shown, and her ensign was half-masted, union down. Captain Winslow for the second time gave orders to cease firing. Thus ended the fight after a duration of one hour

and two minutes. Captain Semmes in his report says: “ Although we were now but four hundred yards from each other, the enemy fired upon me five times after my colors had been struck.

It is charitable to suppose that a ship-of-war of a Christian nation could not have done this intentionally.” He is silent as to the renewal lay the *Alabama* of the fight after his surrender, an act which, in Christian warfare, would have justified the *Kearsarge* in continuing to fire until the *Alabama* had sunk beneath the waters.

Boats were now lowered from the *Alabama*. Her master’s-mate, Fullam, an Englishman, came alongside the *Kearsarge* with a few of the wounded, reported the disabled and sinking condition of his ship, and asked for assistance. Captain Winslow inquired, “ Does Captain Semmes surrender his ship ? “ ”Yes,” was the reply. Fullam then solicited permission to return with his boat and crew to assist in rescuing the drowning, pledging his word of honor that when this was done he would come on board and surrender. Captain Winslow granted the request. With less generosity he could have detained the officer and men, supplied their places in the boat from his ship’s company, secured more prisoners, and afforded equal aid to the distressed. The generosity was abused, as the sequel shows. Fullam pulled to the midst of the drowning, rescued several officers, went to the yacht *Deerhound*, and cast his boat adrift, leaving a number of men struggling in the water.

It was now seen that the *Alabama* was settling fast. The wounded, and boys who could not swim, were sent away in the quarter boats, the waist boats having been destroyed. Captain Semmes dropped his sword into the sea and jumped overboard with the remaining officers and men.

Coming under the stern of the *Kearsarge* from the windward, the *Deerhound* was hailed, and her commander requested by Captain Winslow to run down and assist in picking up the men of the sinking ship. Or, as her owner, Mr. John Lancaster, reported: “The fact is, that when we passed the *Kearsarge* the captain cried out, ‘ For God’s sake, do what you can to save them ‘: and that was my warrant for interfering in any way for the aid and succor of his enemies.” The *Deerhound* was built by the Lairds at the same time and in the same yard with the *Alabama*. Throughout the action she kept about a mile to the windward of the contestants. After being hailed she steamed towards the *Alabama*, which sunk almost immediately after. This was at 12:24. The *Alabama* sunk in forty-five fathoms of water, at a distance of about four and a half miles from the breakwater, off the west entrance. She was severely hulled between the main and mizzen masts, and settled by the stern; the mainmast, pierced by a shot at the very last, broke off near the head

and went over the side, the bow lifted high from the water, and then came the end. Suddenly assuming a perpendicular position, caused by the falling aft of the battery and stores, straight as a plumb-line, stern first, she went down, the jib-boom being the last to appear above water. Down sank the terror of merchantmen, riddled through and through, and as she disappeared to her last resting place there was no cheer; all were silent.

The yacht lowered her two boats, rescued Captain Semmes (wounded in the hand by broken iron rigging), First-Lieutenant Kell, twelve officers, and twenty-six men, leaving the rest of the survivors to the two boats of the *Kearsarge*. Apparently aware that the forty persons he had rescued would be claimed, Mr. Lancaster steamed away as fast as he could directly for Southampton, without waiting for such surgical assistance as the *Kearsarge* might render. Captain Winslow permitted the yacht to secure his prisoners, anticipating their subsequent surrender. Again his confidence was misplaced, and he afterward wrote: “ It was my mistake at the moment that I could not recognize an enemy who, under the garb of a friend, was affording assistance.” The aid of the yacht, it is presumed, was asked in a spirit of chivalry, for the *Kearsarge*, comparatively uninjured, with but three wounded, and a full head of steam, was in condition to engage a second enemy. Instead of remaining at a distance of about four hundred yards from the *Alabama*, and from this position sending two boats, the other boats being injured, the *Kearsarge*, by steaming close to the settling ship, and in the midst of the defeated, could have captured all Semmes, officers, and men. Captain Semmes says: “ There was no appearance of any boat coming to me from the enemy after the ship went down. Fortunately, however, the steam-yacht *Deerhound*, owned by a gentleman of Lancashire, England, Mr. John Lancaster, who was himself on board, steamed up in the midst of my drowning men, and rescued a number of both officers and men from the water. I was fortunate enough myself thus to escape to the shelter of the neutral flag, together with about forty others, all told. About this time the *Kearsarge* sent one, and then, tardily, another boat.”

This imputation of inhumanity is contradicted by Mr. Lancaster’s assertion that he was requested to do what he could to save “ the poor fellows who were struggling in the water for their lives.”

The *Deerhound* edged to the leeward and steamed rapidly away. An officer approached Captain Winslow and reported the presence of Captain Semmes and many officers on board the English yacht. Believing the information authentic, as it was obtained from the prisoners, he suggested the expediency of firing a shot to bring her to, and asked permission. Captain Winslow declined, saying “ it was impossible, the yacht was simply

coming round.” Meanwhile the *Deerhound* increased the distance from the *Kearsarge*; another officer spoke to him in similar language, but with more positiveness. Captain Winslow replied that no Englishman who carried the flag of the Royal Yacht Squadron could so act. The *Deerhound* continued her flight, and yet another officer urged the necessity of firing a shot. With undiminished confidence, Captain Winslow refused, saving the yacht was “ simply coming round,” and would not go away without communicating. Without this trust Captain Winslow might have arrested the yacht in her flight, if only as a politic measure, reserving final action as to the seizure of the fugitives when time had afforded reflection. Had he regarded the wishes of his officers, he would have done so. The escape of the yacht and her coveted prize was manifestly regretted. The bitterness of the regret was clear. The famed *Alabama*, “ a formidable ship, the terror of American commerce, well armed, well manned, well handled,” was destroyed, “ sent to the bottom in an hour,” but her commander had escaped; the victory seemed already lessened. It was held by the Navy Department that Captain Semmes violated the usages of war in surrendering to Captain Winslow through the agency of one of his officers, and then effecting an escape during the execution of the commission; that he was a prisoner of the United States Government from the moment he sent the officer to make the surrender.

She wounded of the survivors were brought on board the *Kearsarge* for surgical attendance. Seventy men, including five officers (Surgeon F. L. Galt, acting paymaster, Second Lieutenant J. D. Wilson, First Assistant-Engineer M. J. Freeman, Third Assistant-Engineer Pundt, and Boatswain McCloskey), were saved by the *Kearsarge*'s boats and a French pilot-boat. Another pilot-boat saved Second Lieutenant Armstrong and some men who were landed at Cherbourg. Lieutenant Wilson was the only officer who delivered up his sword. He refused to go on board the *Deerhound*, and because of his honorable conduct Captain Winslow on taking his parole gave him a letter of recommendation. Our crew fraternized with their prisoners, and shared their clothes, supper, and grog with them. The conduct of the *Alabama*'s Assistant-Surgeon Llewellyn, son of a British rector, deserves mention. He was unremitting in attention to the wounded during battle, and after the surrender superintended their removal to the boats, refusing to leave the ship while one remained. This duty performed, being unable to swim, he attached two empty shell-boxes to his waist, as a life-preserver, and jumped overboard. Nevertheless, he was unable to keep his head above water.

When the *Kearsarge* was cleared for action every man on the sick-list went to his station. The *Kearsarge* had three wounded, of whom one died in the hospital a few

days after the fight. This was William Gowin, ordinary seaman, whose behavior, during and after battle, was worthy of the highest praise. Stationed at the after pivot-gun, he was seriously wounded in the leg by the explosion of a shell; in agony, and exhausted from the loss of blood, he dragged himself to the forward hatch, concealing the severity of his injury so that his comrades might not leave their stations for his assistance; fainting, he was lowered to the care of the surgeon, and when he revived he greeted the surgeon with a smile, saying, “ Doctor, I can fight no more, and so come to you, but it is all right; I am satisfied, for we are whipping the *Alabama*”; and afterwards, “ I will willingly lose my leg or my life if it is necessary.” Lying upon his mattress, he paid attention to the progress of the fight, so far as could be known by the sounds on deck, his face showing satisfaction whenever the cheers of his shipmates were heard; with difficulty he waved his hand over his head, and joined in each cheer with a feeble voice. When a wounded shipmate on either side of him complained he reproved him, saying, “ Am I not worse hurt than you ? and I am satisfied, for we are whipping the *Alabama*.” Directly after the enemy's wounded were brought on board he desired the surgeon to give him no further attention, for he was 4' doing well,” requesting that all aid be given to “ the poor fellows of the *Alabama*.” In the hospital he was patient and resigned, and happy in speaking of the victory. “ This man, so very interesting by his courage and resignation,” wrote the French surgeon-in-chief, received general sympathy; all desired his recovery and lamented his death. At a dinner given by loyal Americans in Paris to Captain Winslow and two of his officers, a telegram was received announcing the death of Gowin. His name was honorably mentioned, his behavior eulogized, and his memory drunk in silence.

At 3:10 P. M. the *Kearsarge* anchored in Cherbourg harbor close by the ship-of-war *Napoléon*, and was soon surrounded by boats of every description filled with excited and inquisitive people. Ambulances, by order of the French admiral, were sent to the landing to receive the wounded, and thence they were taken to the Hopital de la Marine, where arrangements had been made for their reception. Dr. Galt and all the prisoners except four officers were paroled and set on shore before sunset, at which Secretary Welles soon after expressed his disapprobation.

An incident that occasioned gratification was the coincidence of the lowering of the enemy's colors by an early shot from the *Kearsarge* already mentioned, and the unfolding of the victorious flag by a shot from the *Alabama*. The *Kearsarge*'s colors were “stopped” at the mizzen, that they might be displayed if the ensign was carried away, and to serve as the emblem of victory in case

of success. A shot from the last broadside of the *Alabama* passed high over the *Kearsarge* carried away the halyards of the colors stopped at the mizzen, and in so doing pulled sufficiently to break the stop, and thereby unfurled the triumphant flag

The *Kearsarge* received twenty-eight shot and shell, of which thirteen were in the hull, the most efficient being abaft the main-mast. A hundred-pounder rifle shell entered at the starboard quarter and lodged in the sternpost. The blow shook the ship from stem to stern. Luckily it did not explode; otherwise the result would have been serious, if not fatal. A thirty-two-pounder shell entered forward of the forward pivot port, crushing the waterways, raising the gun and carriage, and lodged, but did not explode; else many of the gun's crew would likely have been injured by the fragments and splinters. The smoke-pipe was perforated by a rifle shell, which exploded inside and tore a ragged hole nearly three feet in diameter, and carried away three of the chain guys. Three boats were shattered. The cutting away of the rigging was mostly about the main-mast. The spars were left in good order. A large quantity of pieces of bursted shell was gathered from the deck and thoughtlessly thrown overboard. During the anchorage in Cherbourg harbor no assistance was received from shore, except that rendered by a boiler-maker in patching up the smoke-stack, every other repair being made by our own men.

Captain Semmes in his official report says:

“At the end of the engagement it was discovered, by those of our officers who went alongside the enemy's ship with the wounded, that her midship section on both sides was thoroughly iron-coated. The planking had been ripped off in every direction by our shot and shell, the chain broken and indented in many places, and forced partly into the ship's side. The enemy was heavier than myself, both in ship, battery, and crew; but I did not know until the action was over that she was also iron-clad.”

The ships were well matched in size, speed, armament, and crew, showing a likeness rarely seen in naval battles.³

The number of the ship's company of the *Kearsarge* was one hundred and sixty-three. That of the *Alabama*, from the best information, was estimated at one hundred and fifty; one hundred and thirty are actually reckoned.

3	Alabama.	Kearsarge
Length over all	220 ft.	232 ft.
Length of keel	210 ft.	198½ft.
Beam	32 ft.	33ft.
Depth .	17 ft.	16½ft.
2 Engines of	300 HP each	2 of 400 each.
Tonnage .	1040	1031

According to report additional men were taken on board at Cherbourg.

The chain plating was made of one hundred and twenty fathoms of sheet-chains, of one and seventh-tenths inch iron, covering a space amidships of forty-nine and one-half feet in length by six feet two inches in depth, stopped up and down to eyebolts with marlines, secured by iron dogs, and employed for the purpose of protecting the engines when the upper part of the coal-bunkers was empty, as happened during the action. The chains were concealed by inch deal boards as a finish. The chain plating was struck by a thirty-two pounder shot in the starboard gangway, which cut the chain and bruised the planking; and by a thirty-two-pounder shell, which broke a link of the chain, exploded, and tore away a portion of the deal covering. Had the shot been from the one-hundred-pounder rifle, the result would have been different, though without serious damage, because the shot struck five feet above the water-line, and if sent through the side would have cleared the machinery and boilers. It is proper therefore to assert that in the absence of the chain armor the result would have been nearly the same, notwithstanding the common opinion at the time that the *Kearsarge* was an “iron-clad” contending with a wooden ship. The chains were fastened to the ship's sides more than a year previous to the fight, while at the Azores. It was the suggestion of the executive officer, Lieut.-Commander James S. Thornton, to hang the sheet-chain (or spare anchor-cable) over the sides, so as to protect the midship section, he having served with Admiral Farragut in passing the forts to reach New Orleans, and knowing its benefit on that occasion. The work was done in three days at a cost for material not exceeding seventy-five dollars. In our visits to European ports, the use of sheet-chains for protective purposes had attracted notice and caused comment. It is strange that Captain Semmes did not know of the chain armor: supposed spies had been on board and had been shown through the ship as there was no attempt at concealment; the same pilot had been employed by both ships, and had visited each during the preparation for battle. The *Alabama* had bunkers full of coal, which brought her down in the water. The *Kearsarge* was deficient in seventy tons of coal of her proper supply, but the sheet-chains stowed outside, gave protection to her partly filled bunkers.

The battery of the *Kearsarge* consisted of seven guns: two eleven-inch pivots, smooth bore, one twenty-eight-pounder rifle, and four light thirty-two-pounders; that of the *Alabama* of eight guns: one-sixty-eight-pounder pivot, smooth bore, one one-hundred-pounder pivot rifle, and six heavy thirty-two-pounders. Five guns were fought by the *Kearsarge* and seven by the *Alabama*, each with the

starboard battery. Both ships had made thirteen knots an hour under steam; at the time of the battle the *Alabama* made ten knots. The masts of the *Kearsarge* were low and small; she never carried more than top-sail yards, depending upon her engines for speed. The greater size and height of the masts of the *Alabama* and the heaviness of her rig (barque) gave the appearance of a larger vessel than her antagonist.

Most of the line officers of the *Kearsarge* were from the merchant service, and of the crew only eleven men were of foreign birth. Most of the officers of the *Alabama* were formerly officers in the United States Navy; nearly all the crew were English, Irish, and Welsh, a few of whom were said to belong to the "Royal Naval Reserve." Captain Semmes said: "Mr. Kell, my first lieutenant, deserves great credit for the fine condition in which the ship went into action with regard to her battery, magazine, and shell-rooms"; and he assuredly had confidence in the speed and strength of his ship, as shown by the eagerness and dash with which he opened the fight. The prisoners declared that the best practice during the action was by the gunners who had been trained on board the Excellent in Portsmouth harbor. The Blakely rifle was the most effective gun The *Alabama* fought bravely and obstinately until she could no longer fight or float.

The contest was decided by the superiority of the eleven-inch Dahlgrens, especially the after-pivot, together with the coolness and accuracy of aim of the gunners of the *Kearsarge*, and notably by the skill of William Smith, the captain of the after-pivot, who in style and behavior was the counterpart of Long Tom Coffin in Cooper's "Pilot."

To the disparagement of Captain Winslow it has been said that Lieutenant-Commander Thornton commanded the ship during the action. This is not true. Captain

Winslow, standing on the horse-block abreast the mizzen-mast, fought his ship gallantly and, as is shown by the result, with excellent judgment. In an official report, he wrote:

"It would seem almost invidious to particularize the conduct of any one man or officer, in which all had done their duty with a fortitude and coolness which cannot be too highly praised, but I feel it due to my executive officer, Lieutenant-Commander Thornton, who superintended the working of the battery, to particularly mention him for an example of coolness and encouragement of the men while fighting, which contributed much towards the success of the action."

This Sunday naval duel was fought in the presence of more than fifteen thousand spectators, who upon the heights of Cherbourg, the breakwater, and rigging of men-of-war, witnessed "the last of the *Alabama*." Among them were the captains, their families, and crews of two merchant ships burnt by the daring cruiser a few days before her arrival at Cherbourg, where they were landed in a nearly destitute condition. Many spectators were provided with spy-glasses and camp-stools. The *Kearsarge* was burning Newcastle coals, and the *Alabama* Welsh coals, the difference in the amount of smoke enabling the movements of each ship to be distinctly traced. An excursion train from Paris arrived in the morning, bringing hundreds of pleasure-seekers, who were unexpectedly favored with the spectacle of a sea-fight. A French gentleman at Boulogne-sur-Mer assured me that the fight was the conversation of Paris for more than a week.

NOTE: Eleven Confederate cruisers figured in the so-called "*Alabama* Claims" settlement with England. Named in the order of the damage inflicted by each, these cruisers were: the *Alabama*, *Shenandoah*, *Florida*, *Tallahassee*, *Georgia*, *Chickamaugga*, *Nashville*, *Retribution*, *Sumter*, *Salie* and *Boston*. The actual losses inflicted by the *Alabama* (\$6,547,609.86, according to claims for ships and cargoes filed up to October 25 1871) were only about \$60,000 greater than those inflicted by the *Shenandoah*. The sum total of the claims filed against the eleven cruisers forships and cargoes, up to October 25, 1871, was \$17,900,633.46, all but about four minions of it being charged to the account of the *Alabama* and *Shenandoah*.

On May 8, 1871, the Treaty of Washington was completed in accordance with which a Tribunal of Arbitration was appointed which assembled at Geneva. It consisted of Count Edward Sclopis, named by the King of Italy; Mr. Jacob

Staempfli, named by the President of the Swiss Confederation Viscount d'Itajuba named by the Emperor of Brazil; Mr. Charles Francis Adams, named by the President of the United States; and Sir Alexander Cockburn, named by the Queen of England. The Counsel or Great Britain was Sir Roundell Palmer (afterward Lord Selborne). The United States was represented by William M. Evarts and Caleb Cushing.

Claims were made by the United States for indirect and national losses, as well as for the actual losses represented by the nearly eighteen millions on ships and cargoes. n

The Tribunal decided that England was in no way responsible for the \$1,160,153.95 of losses inflicted by the *Tallahassee*, *Georgia*, *Chickamaugga*, *Nashville*, *Retribution*, and *Sumter*; and on September 14, 1871, it awarded \$15,500,000 damages for actual losses of ships and cargoes and interest, on account of the other five cruisers.—EDITOR.