

**ARTICLES ABOUT THE ENGAGEMENT  
OF THE *C.S.S. ALABAMA*  
AND THE *U.S.S KEARSRAGE***

**in**

***THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS, 1864***

**THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE ALABAMA AND  
THE KEARSARGE OFF CHERBOURG.**

*The Illustrated London News*, 44 (June 25, 1864), p. 607.

One of the most interesting naval engagements that has ever taken place near our shores was that of Sunday morning, between the Confederate cruiser Alabama, commanded by Captain Semmes, and the United States war-steamer Kearsarge, Captain Winslow. The Kearsarge it has been usually called; but the *Morning Star*, which assumes to speak with authority upon all that concerns the Federal party, says that the correct spelling is Kearsarge, which name is derived from "a range of mountains in free New England." After an hour's fighting, the Alabama sank, and the victory remained with the Kearsarge, which was armed with two 11-inch (120-pounder) smoothbore columbiads, besides six 32-pounders; while the Alabama had one 7-inch bore rifled pivot-gun forward, one 8-inch smoothbore pivot-gun at the stern, and six 32-pounders. It seems that the Alabama arrived in Cherbourg on the 11th inst., for the purpose of extensive repairs, after two years' service, latterly in the East Indies. Our readers may perhaps recollect that we published in our Number of April 2 an Engraving, from a sketch by Captain Allen Young, representing the Alabama in Malacca Straits on the day before Christmas Day, when she captured and destroyed the merchant-vessel Martaban, or Texan Star. A day or so after her arrival at Cherbourg the Federal steamer Kearsarge arrived there also, and, instead of coming to anchor, continued to cruise backwards and forwards just outside the breakwater at Cherbourg, challenging the Alabama to fight. The Alabama immediately accepted the challenge thus given, only asking for a few days to complete her arrangements. About ten o'clock on Sunday morning the Alabama left Cherbourg harbour, and the Kearsarge was then several miles out to seaward, with her steam up ready for action. The French plated ship of war Couronne followed the Alabama out of harbour, and stopped when the vessels were a league off the coast; her object being to see that there was no violation of the law of nations by a fight taking place within the legal distance from land. The English steam-yacht *Deerhound*, belonging to Mr. John Lancaster, of Hindley Hall, Wigan, Lancashire, and the schooner-yacht *Hornet*, belonging to Mr. James Bryant, of the Royal Western Yacht Club, followed at a safe distance to witness the conflict. We are indebted to Mr. Bryant for the sketch from which our Engraving is made. The action is thus narrated by Captain Semmes, in his official report to Mr. J. M. Mason, the agent of the Government of the Confederate States in London:--

Southampton, June 21, 1864.

Sir,--I have the honour to inform you that, in accordance with my intention, as previously announced to you, I steamed out of the harbour of Cherbourg, between nine and ten o'clock on the morning of the 19th of June, for the purpose of engaging the enemy's steamer Kearsarge, which had been lying off and on the port for several days previously. After clearing the harbour we descried the enemy, with his head off shore, at a distance of about seven miles. We were three quarters of an hour in coming up with him. I had previously pivoted my guns to starboard, and made all my preparations for engaging the enemy on that side. When within about a mile and a quarter of the enemy he suddenly wheeled, and, bringing his head in shore, presented his starboard battery to me. By this time we were distant about one mile from each other, when I opened on him with solid shot, to which he replied in a few minutes, and the engagement became active on both sides.

The enemy now pressed his ship under a full head of steam; and to prevent our passing each other too speedily, and to keep our respective broadsides bearing, it became necessary to fight in a circle, the two ships steaming around a common centre, and preserving a distance from each other of from a quarter to half a mile. When we got within good shell-range we opened upon him with shell. Some ten or fifteen minutes after the commencement of the action our spanker-gaff was shot away, and our ensign came down by the run. This was immediately replaced by another at the mizenmast-head. The firing now became very hot, and the enemy's shot and shell soon began to tell upon our hull, knocking down, killing, and disabling a number of men in different parts of the ship.

Perceiving that our shell, though apparently exploding against the enemy's sides, were doing him but little damage, I returned to solid-shot firing, and from this time onward alternated with shot and shell.

After the lapse of about one hour and ten minutes our ship was ascertained to be in a sinking condition, the enemy's shell having exploded in our sides and between decks, opening large apertures, through which the water rushed with great rapidity.

For some few minutes I had hopes of being able to reach the French coast, for which purpose I gave the ship all steam, and set such of the fore and aft sails as were available. The ship filled so rapidly, however, that before we had made much progress the fires were extinguished in the furnaces, and we were evidently on the point of sinking. I now hauled down my colours, to prevent the

further destruction of life, and dispatched a boat to inform the enemy of our condition.

Although we were now but 400 yards from each other, the enemy fired upon me five times after my colours had been struck. It is charitable to suppose that a ship of war of a Christian nation could not have done this intentionally.

We now turned all our exertions towards saving the wounded and such of the boys of the ship as were unable to swim. These were dispatched in my quarter-boats, the only boats remaining to us--the waist-boats having been torn to pieces.

Some twenty minutes after my furnace fires had been extinguished, and the ship being on the point of settling, every man, in obedience to a previous order which had been given the crew, jumped overboard and endeavoured to save himself.

There was no appearance of any boat coming to me from the enemy after my 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.

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; this having been done with chain constructed for the purpose, placed perpendicularly from the rail to the water's edge, the whole covered over by a thin outer planking, which gave no indication of the armour beneath.

This 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. She was most effectually guarded, however, in this section from penetration. The enemy was much damaged in other parts, but to what extent it is now impossible to tell; it is believed he was badly crippled.

My officers and men behaved steadily and gallantly; and, though they have lost their ship, they have not lost honour.

Where all behaved so well, it would be invidious to

particularize; but I cannot deny myself the pleasure of saying that 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 that he rendered me great assistance by his coolness and judgment as the fight proceeded.

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.

Our total loss in killed and wounded is thirty--to wit, nine killed, twenty-one wounded.

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

R. Semmes, Captain.

The *Deerhound* brought to Southampton Captain Semmes, thirteen officers, and twenty-six men of the *Alabama*, who have thus escaped the fate of their comrades taken on board the *Kearsarge* and made prisoners of war. The crew of the *Alabama* was about 120 at the time she went out to fight. The *Kearsarge* returned to Cherbourg and anchored there in the afternoon. She had on board sixty-two of the *Alabama's* crew, and nine more were saved by a French pilot-boat. Ten wounded Confederates and three wounded Federals were taken to the Cherbourg hospital.

We shall be able, in our next week's Number, to present some additional Illustrations of this naval duel in the English Channel. The sketch taken by Mr. Bryant on board the *Hornet* is engraved on another page. It was received by us on Tuesday, accompanied with the following note from that gentleman, to whom we owe our best thanks for his prompt assistance so courteously offered:—

Ryde, Isle of Wight, Monday, June 20, 1864.

Sir,--Having witnessed the fight between the *Alabama* and the *Kearsarge* yesterday morning off Cherbourg, I inclose a sketch done at the time the *Alabama* went down. If you will kindly put it in your Paper I shall feel obliged. Yours, truly, James Bryant.

## THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE ALABAMA AND THE KEARSARGE.

*The Illustrated London News*, vol. 45 (July 2, 1864), p. 2.

We published last week an Engraving from the sketch which was sent us by Mr. James Bryant, owner of the yacht *Hornet*, representing the final scene of the combat between the *Alabama* and the *Kearsarge*, a few miles off Cherbourg, on the morning of Sunday, the 19th ult. We are now enabled, by the courtesy of Mr. Robert Lancaster, of Hindley Hall, Wigan, to present our readers with another Illustration of the same subject, which appears on our front page. Mr. Lancaster is the owner of the yacht *Deerhound*, which was present during the whole of the battle, and which was happily instrumental in saving the lives of Captain Semmes, thirteen officers, and twenty-six men of the *Alabama*, when they had leaped into the water as their ship went down. Whilst we may congratulate this gentleman upon the service to humanity which he was thus enabled to perform, we are bound no less to thank him for aiding us, by the work of his pencil, in producing a graphic record of the extraordinary spectacle that he witnessed. Mr. Lancaster says in his letter, which accompanied this drawing:--

“I have endeavoured to take the sketch just at the moment the *Alabama* was going down. We were then about one hundred yards from the sinking vessel, and about twice that distance from the Federal ship, and between the two. Our two boats were a little ahead of us and pulling towards the wreck and the crew, most of whom had jumped overboard and were floating about on loose spars and other things. One of the *Alabama*'s boats, after having taken the wounded on board the *Kearsarge*, returned and picked up another boatfull, and then came alongside the *Deerhound*, where, to prevent her falling into the hands of the Federals, she was sunk by some of the *Alabama*'s men. The sides of the *Kearsarge* were very much cut up, nearly all the chain-plating being exposed on the starboard side. Just as the *Alabama* went down, the mainmast, which had been struck by a shot, fell. The *Kearsarge*'s boats were not lowered until after the *Alabama* had disappeared altogether. I shall be most happy if this sketch will be of any use to you. It is the most correct you will be able to get as to the position of the vessels and boats.”

We have also engraved on another page of this Number a drawing which has been made from the plan and information which have been supplied to our Artist by Mr. George T. Fullam, an officer of the *Alabama*. It was he who conveyed the wounded from that vessel to the *Kearsarge*, and then came on board the *Deerhound*, which brought him to Southampton. He has remarked to our

Artist that it is an incident worth noting, with regard to the damage done to the spars of the *Alabama*, that the throat-blocks of both the main and mizen gaffs were shot away.

as we published last week the official report of Captain Semmes to the agent of the Confederate Government in London, we here subjoin a letter from the Federal commander, Captain Winslow, who writes from Cherbourg as follows:--

Sir,--There have been so many nonsensical publications on the engagement which took place between the *Alabama* and the *Kearsarge* that it is my wish that a correction should be made.

In the first place, no challenge was sent by Captain Winslow; to have done so would have been to have violated the order of the Navy Department. On the contrary, Captain Winslow received a request from Captain Semmes not to leave, as he would fight the *Kearsarge*, and would only occupy a day or two in his preparations. Five days, however, elapsed before they were completed. The *Kearsarge*'s battery consists of seven guns, two 11-inch Dahlgren's, four 12-pounders, one light rifle 28-pounder. The battery of the *Alabama* consisted of one 100-pounder rifle, one heavy 68 ditto, six 32-pounder's, that is, one more gun than the *Kearsarge*. In the wake of the engines on the outside the *Kearsarge* had stopped up and down her sheet chains. These were stopped by marline to eye bolts, which extended some twenty feet, and was done by the hands of the *Kearsarge*; the whole was covered by light plank, to prevent dirt collecting. It was for the purpose of protecting the engines when there was no coal in the upper part of the bunkers, as was the case when the action took place. The *Alabama* had her bunkers full, and was equally protected. The *Kearsarge* went into action with a crew of 162 officers and men. The *Alabama*, by report of the *Deerhound*'s officers, had 150.

The *Kearsarge* steamed to sea in order that no questions of neutrality jurisdiction should be raised; when far enough, she turned short round and steered immediately for the *Alabama* for close action. The *Alabama* fired, as she was coming down on her, two broadsides and part of another; no one shot came on board of the *Kearsarge*. The *Kearsarge* then sheered and opened on the *Alabama*, trying to get nearer. The action lasted one hour and two minutes from the first to the last shot. The *Kearsarge* received twenty-eight shots above and below, thirteen about her hull; the best shots were abaft the mainmast, two shots which cut the chain stops, the shell of which broke the casing of wood covering. They were too

high to have damaged the boilers had they penetrated. The Kearsarge was only slightly damaged, and I supposed the action for hot work had just commenced when it ended. Such stuff as the Alabama firing when she was going down, and all such talk, is twaddle. The Alabama towards the last hoisted sail to get away, when the Kearsarge was laid across her bows, and would have raked had she not surrendered, which she had done, and was trying to get her flags down and showing a white flag over the stern. The officers of the Alabama on board the Kearsarge say that she was a complete slaughter-house, and was completely torn to pieces. This is all I know of the Alabama. Yours, &c.,

John A. Winslow, Captain.

It may be observed that Captain Winslow does not mention the way in which the officers and crew of the Alabama were saved upon the sinking of their ship. It is clear, however, that he made no such attempt to rescue them as a generous enemy would have done; but the log kept on board the Deerhound records that, when the yacht was passing the Kearsarge, it was "requested to assist in saving the Alabama's crew." Both Captain Semmes and Mr. Lancaster have testified that the boats of the Kearsarge were not sent for that purpose until after the Alabama had disappeared, though the Alabama had not only surrendered but had sent her wounded to be received on board the Kearsarge as prisoners of war. It is therefore probable that, if it had not been for Mr. Lancaster's prompt interference, Captain Semmes and his brave comrades would have shared the fate of Mr. Herbert Llewellyn, the surgeon (an Englishman, the son of a clergyman in Wiltshire), who perished with their sinking vessel. The Deerhound has therefore earned, in our opinion, the fairest honours of the day. She was the object of much curiosity and admiration during her stay at Southampton from the Sunday to the Wednesday, when she left that port for Hull. As we have given her a conspicuous place in the Engraving on our front page, it may be stated that she is entered on the lists of the Royal Yacht Squadron of Cowes, the Royal Mersey Yacht Club of Liverpool, and the (Irish) Royal Western Yacht Club stationed at Queenstown. She was built, as it happens, upon the same model as the Alabama, in the same shipyard at Birkenhead, by Messrs. Laird and Co. She is a three-masted vessel, built of steel, with a screw-propeller, with a tonnage (builders' measurement) of about 190, and engines of a nominal power of seventy horse. When in her usual trim she steams twenty knots, being about two knots beyond the speed of the Alabama. She carries a crew of thirteen men. The Deerhound now proceeds from Hull to Norway. Mr. Lancaster and his captain indignantly deny the statement that an arrangement was made with the

Deerhound by Captain Semmes, before the engagement, that the yacht should hover about the combatants and render assistance to the Alabama. They knew that Captain Semmes had determined to engage the Kearsarge, but no arrangement of any kind was thought of.

The famous Alabama herself, which was originally called "No. 290," came from Messrs. Laird's building-yard in July, 1862, and received her armament and crew at Terceira, in the Azores, whence she started upon a career most destructive to the maritime commerce of the United States. She is said to have captured and burnt, in less than two years, one hundred American vessels. She was a barque-rigged wooden propeller, of 1040 ton's register. Length of keel, 210 ft.; length over all, 220 ft.; beam, 32 ft.; depth, 17 ft. Her engines, built by the same firm, were two horizontal ones, each of 300-horse power, with stowage for 350 tons of coals. Her sails, carried at all times, were as follows:--Fore, fore topmast, staysail jib, two large trysails; the usual square sails on fore and main, with the exception of the mainsail, which was a flying one; spanker and gaff-topsails; all standing rigging wire. Double wheel, with motto engraved thereon, "Aide toi, et Dieu t'aidera," placed just before the mizenmast. Bridge in the centre, just before the funnel. She carried five boats--viz., cutter and launch amidships, gig and whaleboat between the main and mizen masts, and dingy astern. The main deck was pierced for twelve gusts, elliptic stern, billet head, high bulwarks; cabin accommodation first class; wardroom furnished with a handsome suite of state-rooms; steerage--starboard for midshipmen, port for engineers; next came engine-room, and coal-bunkers; then the berth deck, capable of accommodating 120 men; under the wardroom were store-rooms; and under the steerage were shell-rooms; just forward of the firearms came the hold; next the magazines, and forward of all the boatswains' and sailmakers' store-rooms; the hold being under the berth deck.

The Kearsarge, named after a range of hills in Vermont, is a recent acquisition to the navy of the United States; in fact, she is one of the nine gun-boats completed within three months from the date of the order given. She is the sister ship of the Tuscarora, whose presence in the Solent, during the visit of the Confederate cruiser Nashville (since destroyed), occasioned considerable excitement some time since.

A correspondence is published between Captain Winslow and Mr. Bonfils, the French Confederate agent. Captain Winslow claims as his prisoners those of the Alabama's crew rescued by pilot-boats, and brought into Cherbourg. He allowed the pilot-boats to save the prisoners, from motives of humanity, but if the prisoners endeavour to free themselves from the obligation they must expect to meet no mercy another time. Mr. Bonfils

replies that there is nothing to hinder even a surrendered prisoner from escaping if he can, and he declines to act as a go-between between Captain Winslow and persons he

does not even name; nor can he understand how Captain Winslow can claim to hold prisoners within the territory of the French empire.