

**STATEMENT OF EVAN PARRY JONES,  
CAPTAIN OF THE YACHT *DEERHOUND***

in

Arthur Sinclair  
*Two Years on the Alabama*  
Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1896,  
Pages 287-291

## CAPTAIN JONES S STATEMENT

ON June 9, 1864, we were lying at St. Malo, where we landed Mr. Lancaster and family, after a cruise among the Channel islands. On their leaving, we immediately set sail for Cherbourg, calling on our way to Jersey for letters. We arrived at Cherbourg, and came to anchor close to the Alabama, and to an English sailing-yacht, the Hornet. We had no communication with the Alabama during our stay in the harbor, except to send alongside, asking permission to visit, which they refused, saying that they were too busy. We could see from our vessel that they were practising boarding-drill, and surmised that they had it in view to board the Kearsarge in the engagement which rumor in Cherbourg had it was to take place on the following Sunday.

On the day previous to the fight I met Mr. Lancaster and family at the station (as was my custom), and informed him that the Alabama was lying in the harbor. I reminded him that she was built at Messrs. Lairds yard, at Birkenhead, during the time that the Deerhound was there being lengthened. I also told him that the Kearsarge had steamed in at the east end of the harbor, and out at the west, evidently taking a survey of the enemy. No doubt this was a great advantage to Capt. Winslow, who also got at the same time a full report of the Alabama's condition from the American consul of the port especially as to the condition of her boilers, which I believe were in a very bad state.

After the family came on board, they held a consultation as to whether they would go out on Sunday morning to see the fight. Mr. Lancaster put it to the vote, and Miss Lancaster (now Mrs. Part) gave the casting vote for going out. Early the next morning we noticed that the Alabama was getting up steam; and I ordered the same to be done on our little craft. Soon after breakfast we steamed quietly out of the harbor; and when about four miles out, we observed the Kearsarge well down on the eastern horizon, and that the Alabama was steaming out of the harbor with a strong starboard list. She passed us close, heading directly for the enemy, and shortly afterward fired two or three shots with the starboard guns. The Kearsarge replied, also with her starboard battery. Both vessels were soon firing rapidly, steaming slowly on a circle about half a mile distant from each other. About thirteen minutes after the fight began, we noticed that there was a little confusion on the Kearsarge. I ascertained afterward that a shell had struck and entered the stern-post of the Kearsarge; but unluckily for the Alabama it did not explode. Had it done so, there can be no question but that the Alabama's plan of boarding would have been successfully carried out. As it was, the greater speed of the Kearsarge frustrated her evident wish to come to close quarters, which we could make out plainly enough. In my opinion, had boarding been practicable, the Alabama would have made short work of her opponent; for her crew were dare-devils from all nations, and picked for splendid physical qualities. I was under the impression at the time that the American consul had warned Capt. Winslow of the purpose of his enemy, as indicated by the incessant drills she was keeping up, and that the latter thought it as well not to accommodate. This was very much against the Alabama, as her ammunition was old and damp. I understand Semmes tried to get a fresh supply, but the French government prohibited it.<sup>1</sup> The Kearsarge, as it was, had her well in hand the whole time, her superior speed enabling her to choose position and distance. As to the chain-armor, no doubt it saved her greatly; but the Alabama's list to starboard was perhaps almost as great an advantage, presenting so much less surface to the enemy's shot. It was a fair stand-up fight. The two vessels were constructed of the same materials, and the chances at first seemed to be even enough.

After the Alabama went down, we steamed round the starboard quarter of the Kearsarge, and Capt. Winslow asked us to render all assistance possible to the drowning crew. We picked up forty-two, including Capt. Semmes, who had a life-belt on when rescued. William Roberts, our chief steward, recognized Semmes in the water from having seen him previously on the Confederate steamship Sumter, at Gibraltar, where the Deerhound happened to be at the same time. Mr. Kell, the first officer of the Alabama, was rescued with Semmes; and Semmes probably owed his life to him, as he unquestionably did his liberty. It was Kell who suggested that Semmes should lie flat in the bottom of the boat, to prevent his recognition by the party in the Kearsarge's launch, which was close by us, and who donned himself one of our crew hats, with the word "DEERHOUND" on it, and took an oar, so as to pass for one of our men. The question was asked from the launch whether Semmes had been saved or not. Kell promptly replied, "He is drowned;" and the assurance was accepted, thus securing Semmes's escape. We were sorry we did not succeed in saving Mr. Llewellyn, the surgeon. Our boat was but a few yards off, and pulling toward him, when he went down.

When we had saved all we could, we prepared to sail for Southampton. I consulted Mr. Kell as to the international law in the case (he having a deal of experience in such matters), whether we were bound to deliver the persons we had rescued to the Kearsarge. He replied that as long as we kept the English flag flying, there could be no question that those

---

<sup>1</sup>I suppose Jones refers here to our ammunition. He is mistaken in stating the Alabama was refused fresh powder. No request was made in this connection. We had not discovered our ammunition damaged until the fight was opened. Neutrality laws would not have disallowed us a fresh powder supply.

who had found refuge under it were entitled to its protection. This decision was later fully confirmed from higher quarters. At the time the Kearsarge was about two miles from us, evidently taking breath, and looking over her damages.

On our way to Southampton we passed the sailing-yacht Hornet, Hewitt, master ; and one of the saved men remarked that they had all their treasure, including about sixty chronometers, on board her. The same evening we arrived off Cowes, where Mr. Lancaster went on shore and reported himself at Cowes Castle as a member of the Royal Yacht squadron. We landed all the saved men at Southampton. The next day Mr. Lancaster gave the Times correspondent all the details. Afterward Mr. Mason (of the Mason and Slidell episode) came on board, and thanked Mr. Lancaster and family for their kindness and humanity.

When Semmes came on board he was wounded and exhausted, and a most miserable object to look at. But after a little nursing he came on deck as bright as a dandy-cock. Semmes seemed to be greatly revered by his crew, but I think Kell had their deepest regard. According to their idea, Kell was Semmes's mainstay and chief counsellor, and the commander owed much of his success and reputation to his first officer's sagacity and promptness of resource.

The Deerhound was sold to Sir George Stuckley, and was at the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, with Sir Stafford Northcote on board. She was the first British yacht to enter the canal. She was subsequently sold again, and went to the coast of Zanzibar, where she was the means of rescuing many slaves. She eventually foundered in a storm. Thus ended the days of the historic

EVAN P. JONES, Captain.  
Yacht Deerhound.