The Barrington Review

Entered as Second-Class Matter.

W. T. LAMEY, Editor and Publisher.

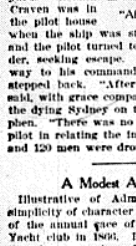
Friday, May 26, 1905

ON Aug. 5, 1864, when Farragut steamed into Mobile bay, taking the lead of the line of monitors and gunboats with his flagship Hartford, Captain Craven of the Tecumseh asked for the post of honor in attacking the Confederate ram Tennessee, whose destruction was the object of the raid. The bay was planted with torpedoes, and the line marking them was buoyed out, yet when the gallant captain saw a chance to close with the Tennessee he drove the Tecumseh hastily across the line. She had gone but a few yards when one or more torpedoes exploded under her. She went down bows first, her screw plainly visible for a moment to all on the Tennessee, which was awaiting the onset not 200 yards distant. Craven was in the pilot house when the ship was struck. Both he and the pilot turned to the turret ladder, seeking escape. The pilot gave way to his commander, but Craven stepped back. "After you, pilot," he said, with grace comparable to that of the dying Sydney on the field of Zutphen. "There was no after," said the pilot in relating the incident. Craven and 120 men were drowned.

"After you, pilot."

A Modest Admiral.

Illustrative of Admiral Farragut's simplicity of character was an incident of the annual race of the New York Yacht club in 1866. In the course of that day a number of ladies insisted upon his telling the story of his being lashed to the rigging of the Hartford in the battle of Mobile Bay.



"That's all."

"Oh," answered Farragut, "some noise was made about that, but it was not as people told it. I had gone up aloft—to see better—to get above the smoke of the ship's guns. It sometimes happens that a man faints when wounded, and to insure me against a fall in such a case an officer took a small piece of rope and tied me fast—that's all."

"That's all" was delightful in its modesty.

How Semmes Quelled a Mutiny.

"The first and only mutiny on the Alabama," wrote Captain Raphael Semmes in his memoirs, "occurred when the vessel was lying at St. Pierre, Martinique. A crowd of sulky and surly sailors gathered about the foremast, using mutinous language and defying the authorities of the ship. I ordered the first lieutenant to 'beat to quarters.' Such was the effect of previous discipline that the moment they heard the well known signals the crew 'fell in' mechanically at their guns. Wherever I observed a drunken man I ordered his comrades to arrest him. Some showed fight, but they were soon overpowered and put in irons. Calling two or three of the quartermasters, I ordered them to dash buckets of water over the mutineers in quick succession. Derision, under repeated douches, turned to silence and silence to supplication. Did the captain want to drown them? If I would only let them go I would never have occasion to complain of them again. It became a saying afterward among the sailors that 'old Beeswax' was hades on watering a fellow's grog."

Water for mutineers.

Capture of Mason and Slidell.

The real hero of the capture of the Confederate envoys Mason and Slidell from the British steamer Trent, according to a sailor who was present, was Lieutenant D. M. Fairfax, commander of the boarding party. "Fairfax's task was an unpleasant one," he says. "He was a Virginian by birth and was on terms of intimacy with the Mason and Slidell families. The two men reproached him bitterly and called him a traitor to the south and to his state. It was said that he was engaged to Miss Slidell, one of the most beautiful girls I ever saw, and when I saw her pleading with him for her father I thought if I was in his boots I would throw up both hands and yield. But he didn't. He just shut his teeth together and said that his duty compelled him to take those men, and he was going to take them. It was pretty tough, though, and it ended everything between them."

Pleading with him.

The Sinking of the Alabama.

On June 19, 1864, the United States frigate Kearsarge was off Cherbourg, France. It was Sunday. The bell tolled for service, and Captain Winslow stepped on deck, his prayer book in his hand. While the crew was assembling the lookout shouted, "The Alabama!" The captain put by the sacred volume and ordered his ship about to meet the cruiser. The Alabama came on, escorted as far as the neutral line of waters by a French frigate. Fearing that the Confederate cruiser if defeated might receive the French shore line and escape, Winslow put to sea several miles. The Alabama followed and when the Kearsarge again put about opened with solid broadsides. Winslow held his fire for close work, as his guns were loaded with five seconds shell. The fight took place in a circle, both ships sailing around a common center. When the vessels came within two yards of each other Winslow opened fire. At every discharge many of the Confederate gunners went down, and in some cases a whole gun crew was wiped out by a single shell. The firing of the Alabama produced no effect upon the Kearsarge, and Commander Semmes ordered his ship steered for the French coast. Then the Kearsarge steamed nearer and gave the Alabama volley after volley. Within one hour after firing the first shell the Alabama sank. Semmes was picked up by a British yacht.

"The Alabama!"

One of Cushing's Exploits.

One of the most daring of Captain W. B. Cushing's many sensational exploits was his attempted capture of the Confederate General Hebert. To convince his superior of the feasibility of a certain plan he had matured Cushing undertook to bring the Confederate commander to breakfast on board the flagship. With twenty men in the boats he pulled past Fort Caswell and the forts at Bald Head, in the mouth of Cape Fear river, and landed at Smithville, the Confederate headquarters. Hidingthisboats and their crews within twenty five yards of a battery, he went, with two men, to General Hebert's house, in the center of the town. Cushing crept up the stairs to the general's room, which had been located for him by a friendly negro, and dragged from bed a dazed sleeper who proved to be Hebert's chief engineer, Captain Kelley. From him he learned that the general was not at home. The headquarters desks were rifled of papers and maps, and while alarm cries were sounding through the camp Cushing and his party, with their substitute prisoner, Captain Kelley, were in the middle of the stream, dropping down as noiselessly as they had come.

Cushing crept upstairs.

Dewey and the Shark.

At Mobile bay after the fall of New Orleans George Dewey was a junior watch officer on the steam sloop Mississippi. The ship's colored cook, called in naval parlance the "doctor," tried to convert Dewey to faith in the danger of sharks, but Dewey held that they would never bite a human being.

One day Dewey was sent ashore in the ship's dingey on some trifling duty. He had on, as usual, a frock coat with very long tails, and as he sat in the sternof the skiff his coat tails trailed in the water. Just as the dingey was on the point of reaching the vessel a shark rose to the surface and bit off the starboard side of the lieutenant's after uniform.

Dewey jumped to his feet and ran up the side of the ship. The "doctor," who had viewed the proceedings from the vessel, approached him presently with a grin of the utmost width. "Ah, ha!" he said, taking advantage of the familiarity customarily allowed him on board. "Perhaps, Massa Dewey, yo' b'lieve now dat sharks won't bite a pusson. Whar yo' coat tail, eh?"

"My coat tail," replied the lieutenant, with his habitual sang froid," has been removed by an act of Providence."

A shark rose.

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Butler's Order Was Obeyed.

General B. F. Butler had a horse that he thought a great deal of. The name of the horse was Almond Eye. An orderly reported that the horse had fallen into a ravine and broken his neck. Butler felt pretty bad, and he thought he would have the horse skinned and stuffed. He called one of the soldiers, an Irishman, and told him to go and skin the horse.

"What! Is Almond Eye dead?" asked the Irishman.

"What business of yours is it?" replied General Butler. "Don't ask questions, but do as I tell you at once, my man."

Pat went about his business and in a couple of hours returned to the general's headquarters.

"Does it take you two hours to skin a horse?" asked the general.

"Sure, general; it took me an hour to catch him," said the Irishman.

"Catch him?" echoed Butler. "You don't mean that the horse was alive?"

"Yis, general, and I couldn't skin him alive very well," replied Pat.

"You don't mean to say you killed my horse?" said General Butler.

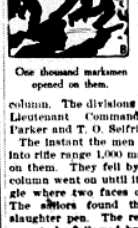
"Sure and I did," said Pat. "You know you told me I was to obey orders without asking questions." General Butler was at a loss for a reply.

"Catch him?" echoed Butler.

Carnage at Fort Fisher.

Fort Fisher, the last important fortress of the Confederacy, succumbed on Jan. 15, 1865, to a combined land and naval assault. For three hours Commodore Porter had bombarded the fort. At noon the signal was given to seamen and marines to go ashore. Two thousand men landed in small boats. Owing to the heavy musketry fire they found it impossible to intrench, and the whole assemblage in bands of 25 to 100 advanced in three divisions with wild yells. Lieutenant Commander Breese led the column. The divisions were headed by Lieutenant Commanders Cushman, Parker and T. O. Selfridge, Jr.

The instant the men sprang forward into rifle range 1,000 marksmen opened on them. They fell by scores, but the column went on until it reached an angle where two faces of the fort met. The sailors found themselves in a slaughter pen. The rear ranks broke, soon to be followed by nearly all who could get away. In the charge 300 were killed and wounded. Breese, Parker and Cushman refused to retire and, with about sixty men, clung to the foot of the parapet until the fortress fell. Robley D. Evans, now a rear admiral, was wounded four times in this fight.



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"Captain Mortimer de Montague of the skirmish guard put on one when he went to the general's reception, and the collar stood up so high that he couldn't put his cap on, while the other department didn't quite reach to his waist. As he entered the drawing room General Scott remarked very feelingly: 'Ah, here comes another of the wounded heroes!'

"'He's not wounded, general,' remarked an officer standing by.

"'Then why is his head bandaged up so?' asked the venerable veteran.

"'Oh,' said the officer, 'that's only one of the shirts made by the patriotic women of America.'

"In about five minutes after this conversation I saw the venerable veteran [illegible] the bandaged hero at the office taking the oath—with sugar in it—together."

"He's not wounded."

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