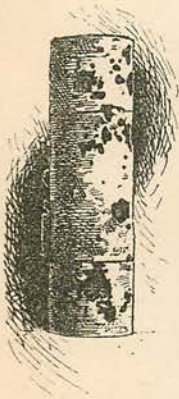


THE CAREER OF THE CONFEDERATE RAM "ALBEMARLE."

I. HER CONSTRUCTION AND SERVICE.

BY HER BUILDER.



PART OF THE SMOKE-STACK OF THE "ALBEMARLE."

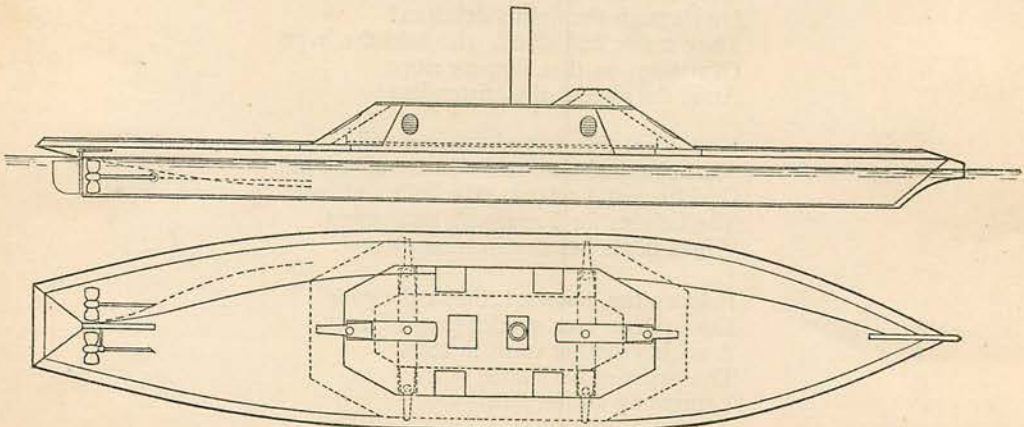
DURING the spring of 1863, having been previously engaged in unsuccessful efforts to construct war vessels, of one sort or another, for the Confederate Government, at different points in eastern North Carolina and Virginia, I undertook a contract with the Navy Department to build an iron-clad gun-boat, intended, if ever completed, to operate on the waters of Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds. A point on the Roanoke River, in Halifax County, North Carolina, about thirty miles below the town of Weldon, was fixed upon as the most suitable for the purpose. The river rises and falls, as is well known, and it was necessary to locate the yard on ground sufficiently free from overflow to admit of uninterrupted work for at least twelve months. No vessel was ever constructed under more adverse circumstances. The shipyard was established in a corn-field, where the ground had already been marked out and planted for the coming crop, but the owner of the land was in hearty sympathy with the enterprise, and aided me then and afterwards, in a thousand ways, to accomplish the end I had in view. It was next to impossible to obtain machinery suitable for the work in

hand. Here and there, scattered about the surrounding country, a portable saw-mill, blacksmith's forge, or other apparatus was found, however, and the citizens of the neighborhoods on both sides of the river were not slow to render me assistance, but coöperated, cordially, in the completion of the iron-clad, and at the end of about one year from the laying of the keel, during which innumerable difficulties were overcome by constant application, determined effort, and incessant labor, day and night, success crowned the efforts of those engaged in the undertaking.

Seizing an opportunity offered by comparatively high water, the boat was launched, though not without misgivings as to the result, for the yard being on a bluff she had to take a jump, and as a matter of fact was "hogged" in the attempt, but to our great gratification did not thereby spring a leak.

The plans and specifications were prepared by John L. Porter, Chief Constructor of the Confederate Navy, who availed himself of the advantage gained by his experience in converting the frigate *Merrimac* into the iron-clad *Virginia* at the Gosport Navy Yard.

The *Albemarle* was 152 feet long between perpendiculars; her extreme width was 45 feet; her depth from the gun-deck to the keel was 9 feet, and when launched she drew $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet of water, but after being ironed and completed her draught was about 8 feet. The

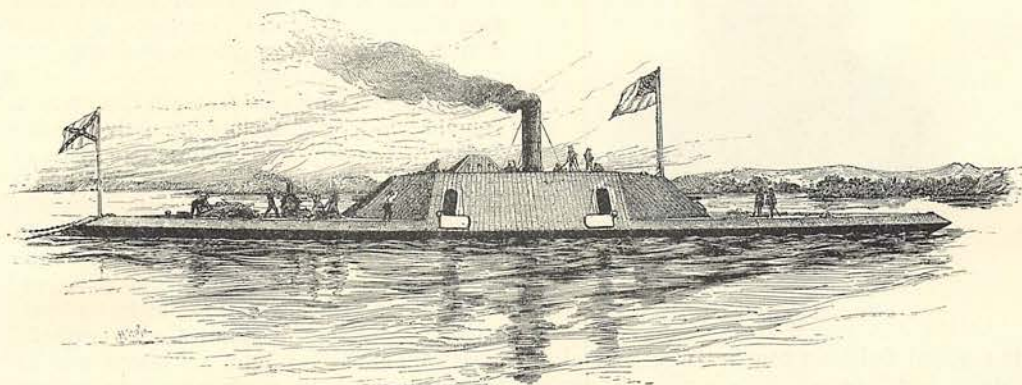


PLAN OF THE "ALBEMARLE."

keel was laid, and construction was commenced by bolting down, across the center, a piece of frame timber, which was of yellow pine, eight by ten inches. Another frame of the same size was then dovetailed into this, extending outwardly at an angle of 45 degrees, forming the side, and at the outer end of this the frame for the shield was also dovetailed, the angle

Oak knees were bolted in, to act as braces and supports for the shield.

The armament consisted of two rifled "Brooke" guns mounted on pivot-carriages, each gun working through three port-holes, as occasion required, there being one port-hole at each end of the shield and two on each side. These were protected by iron



THE "ALBEMARLE" GOING DOWN THE ROANOKE.

being 35 degrees, and then the top deck was added, and so on around to the other end of the bottom beam. Other beams were then bolted down to the keel, and to the one first fastened, and so on, working fore and aft, the main-deck beams being interposed from stem to stern. The shield was 60 feet in length and octagonal in form. When this part of the work was completed she was a solid boat, built of pine frames, and if calked would have floated in that condition, but she was afterwards covered with 4-inch planking, laid on longitudinally, as ships are usually planked, and this was properly calked and pitched, cotton being used for calking instead of oakum, the latter being very scarce and the former almost the only article to be had in abundance. Much of the timber was hauled long distances. Three portable saw-mills were obtained, one of which was located at the yard, the others being moved about from time to time to such growing timber as could be procured.

The iron plating consisted of two courses, 7 inches wide and 2 inches thick, mostly rolled at the Tredegar Iron Works, Richmond. The first course was laid lengthwise, over a wooden backing, 16 inches in thickness, a 2-inch space, filled in with wood, being left between each two layers to afford space for bolting the outer course through the whole shield, and the outer course was laid flush, forming a smooth surface, similar to that of the *Virginia*. The inner part of the shield was covered with a thin course of planking, nicely dressed, mainly with a view to protection from splinters.

covers lowered and raised by a contrivance worked on the gun-deck. She had two propellers driven by two engines of 200-horse power each, with 20-inch cylinders, steam being supplied by two flue boilers, and the shafting was geared together.

The sides were covered from the knuckle, four feet below the deck, with iron plates two inches thick.

The prow was built of oak, running 18 feet back, on center keelson, and solidly bolted, and it was covered on the outside with iron plating, 2 inches thick and, tapering off to a 4-inch edge, formed the ram.

The work of putting on the armor was prosecuted for some time under the most disheartening circumstances, on account of the difficulty of drilling holes in the iron intended for her armor. But one small engine and drill could be had, and it required, at the best, twenty minutes to drill an inch and a quarter hole through the plates, and it looked as if we would never accomplish the task. But "necessity is the mother of invention," and one of my associates in the enterprise, Peter E. Smith, of Scotland Neck, North Carolina, invented and made a twist-drill with which the work of drilling a hole could be done in four minutes, the drill cutting out the iron in shavings instead of fine powder.

For many reasons it was thought judicious to remove the boat to the town of Halifax, about twenty miles up the river, and the work of completion, putting in her machinery, armament, etc., was done at that point, although



CAPTAIN J. W. COOKE, C. S. N.

the actual finishing touches were not given until a few days before going into action at Plymouth.

Forges were erected on her decks, and blacksmiths and carpenters were kept hard at work as she floated down the river to her destination.

Captain James W. Cooke, of the Confederate Navy, was detailed by the department to watch the construction of the vessel and to take command when she went into commission. He made every effort to hasten the completion of the boat. He was a bold and gallant officer, and in the battles in which he subsequently engaged he proved himself a hero. Of him it was said that "he would fight a powder magazine with a coal of fire," and if such a necessity could by any possibility have existed he would, doubtless, have been equal to the occasion.

In the spring of 1864 it had been decided at headquarters that an attempt should be made to recapture the town of Plymouth. General Hoke was placed in command of the land forces, and Captain Cooke received orders to coöperate. Accordingly Hoke's division proceeded to the vicinity of Plymouth and surrounded the town from the river above to the river below, and preparation was made to storm the forts and breastworks as soon as the *Albemarle* could clear the river front of the Federal war vessels protecting the place with their guns.

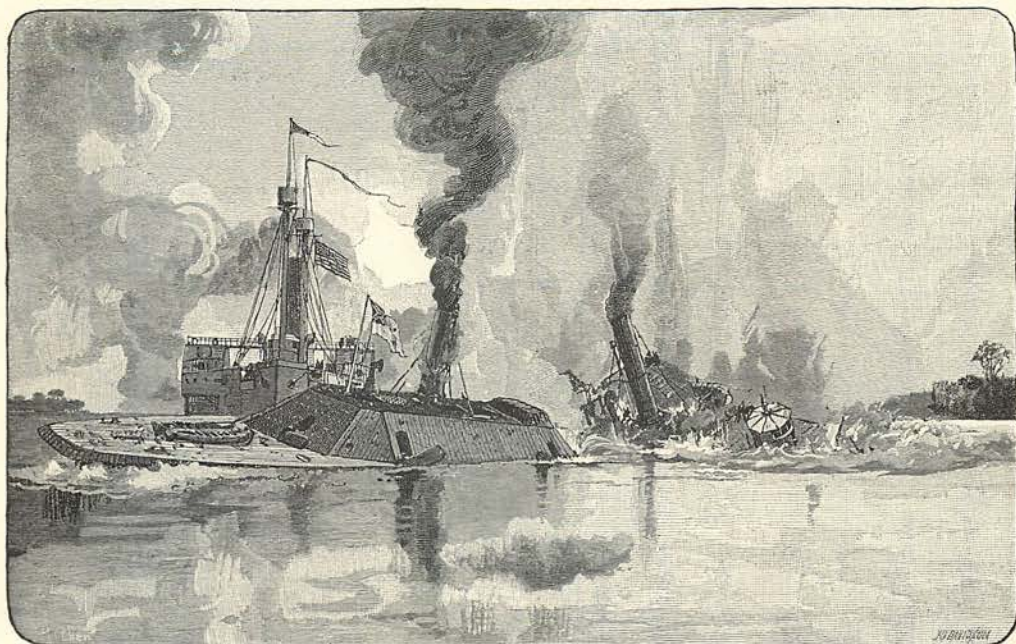
On the morning of April 18, 1864, the *Albemarle* left the town of Hamilton and proceeded down the river towards Plymouth, going stern foremost, with chains dragging from the bow, the rapidity of the current making it impracticable to steer with her head

down-stream. She came to anchor about three miles above Plymouth, and a mile or so above the battery on the bluff at Warren's Neck, near Thoroughfare Gap, where torpedoes, sunken vessels, piles, and other obstructions had been placed. An exploring expedition was sent out, under command of one of the lieutenants, which returned in about two hours, with the report that it was considered impossible to pass the obstructions. Thereupon the fires were banked, and the officers and crew not on duty retired to rest.

Having accompanied Captain Cooke as a volunteer aide, and feeling intensely dissatisfied with the apparent intention of lying at anchor all that night, and believing that it was "then or never" with the ram if she was to accomplish anything, and that it would be foolhardy to attempt the passage of the obstructions and batteries in the day-time, I requested permission to make a personal investigation. Captain Cooke cordially assenting, and Pilot John Luck and two of the few experienced seamen on board volunteering their services, we set forth in a small lifeboat, taking with us a long pole, and arriving at the obstructions proceeded to take soundings. To our great joy it was ascertained that there was ten feet of water over and above the obstructions. This was due to the remarkable freshet then prevailing; the proverbial "oldest inhabitant" said, afterwards, that such high water had never before been seen in Roanoke River. Pushing on down the stream to Plymouth, and taking



COMMANDER C. W. FLUSSER, U. S. N.



THE SINKING OF THE "SOUTHFIELD."

advantage of the shadow of the trees on the north side of the river, opposite the town, we watched the Federal transports taking on board the women and children who were being sent away for safety, on account of the approaching bombardment. With muffled oars, and almost afraid to breathe, we made our way back up the river, hugging close to the northern bank, and reached the ram about 1 o'clock, reporting to Captain Cooke that it was practicable to pass the obstructions provided the boat was kept in the middle of the stream. The indomitable commander instantly aroused his men, gave the order to get up steam, slipped the cables in his impatience to be off, and started down the river. The obstructions were soon reached and safely passed, under a fire from the fort at Warren's Neck which was not returned. Protected by the iron-clad shield, to those on board the noise made by the shot and shell as they struck the boat sounded no louder than pebbles thrown against an empty barrel. At Boyle's Mill, lower down, there was another fort upon which was mounted a very heavy gun. This was also safely passed, and we then discovered two steamers coming up the river. They proved to be the *Miami* and the *Southfield*.*

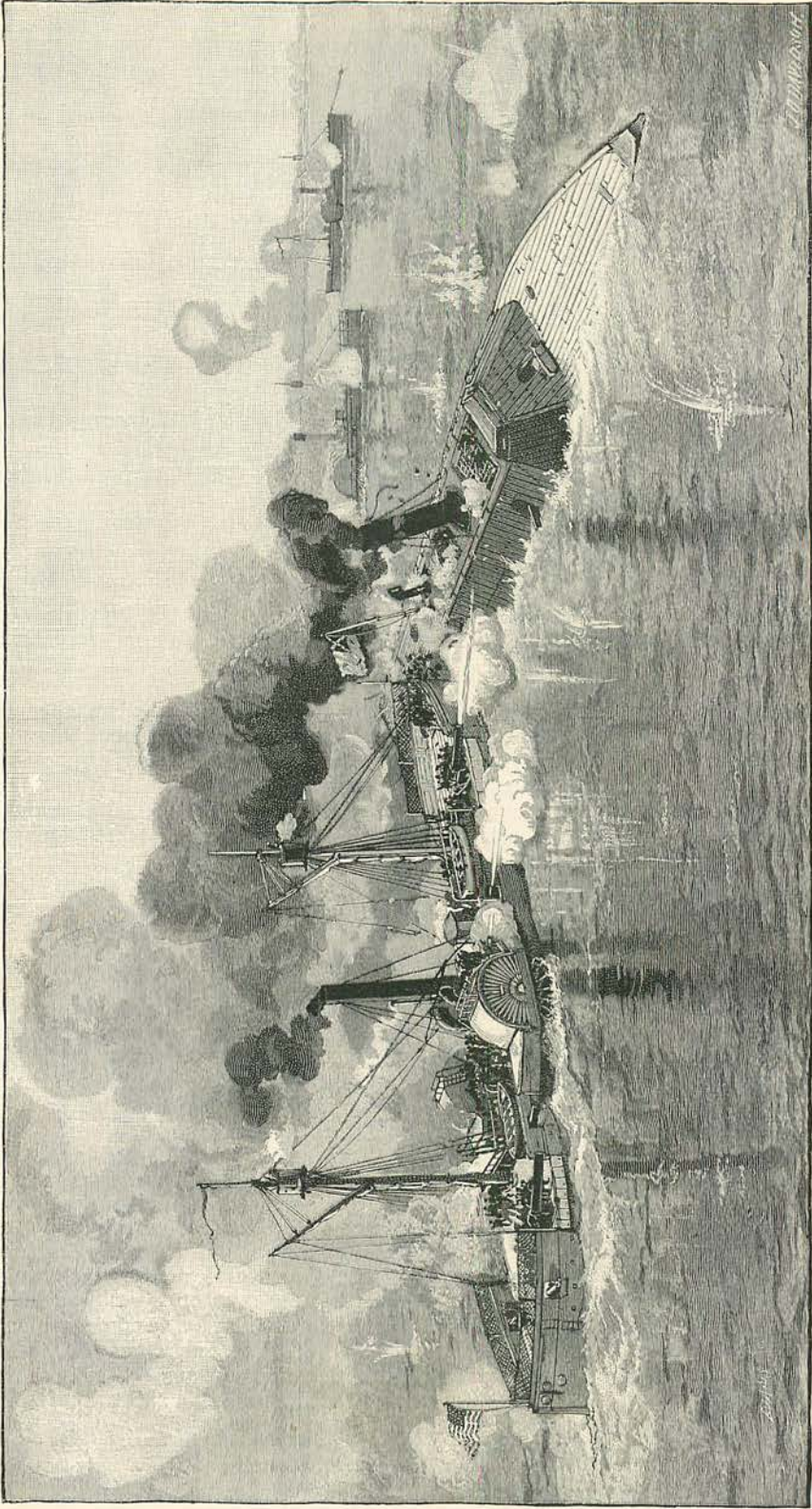
The two ships were lashed together with long spars, and with chains festooned between them. The plan of Captain Flusser, who commanded, was to run his vessels so as to get the *Albemarle* between the two, which would have placed the ram at a great disadvantage, if not altogether at his mercy; but Pilot John Luck, acting under orders from Captain Cooke, ran the ram close to the southern shore; and then suddenly turning toward the middle of the stream, and going with the current, the throttles, in obedience to his bell, being wide open, he dashed the prow of the *Albemarle* into the side of the *Southfield*, making an opening large enough to carry her to the bottom in much less time than it takes to tell the story. Part of her crew went down with her.†

The chain-plates on the forward deck of the *Albemarle* became entangled in the frame of the sinking vessel, and her bow was carried down to such a depth that water poured into her port-holes in great volume, and she would soon have shared the fate of the *Southfield*, had not the latter vessel reached the bottom, and then, turning over on her side, released the ram, thus allowing her to come up on an even keel. The *Miami*, right alongside, had opened fire with her heavy guns, and so close were the vessels together that a shell with a ten-second

* The *Miami* carried 6 9-inch guns, 1 100-pounder Parrott rifle, and 1 24-pounder S. B. howitzer, and the ferry-boat *Southfield* 5 9-inch, 1 100-pounder Parrott, and 1 12-pounder howitzer.—EDITOR.

† Of the officers and men of the *Southfield*, seven of

the former, including Acting Volunteer Lieutenant C. A. French, her commander, and forty-two of her men were rescued by the *Miami* and the other Union vessels; the remainder were either drowned or captured.—EDITOR.



THE "SASSACUS" RAMMING THE "ALBEMARLE."

fuse, fired by Captain Flusser, after striking the *Albemarle* rebounded and exploded, killing the gallant man who pulled the lanyard, tearing him almost to pieces. Notwithstanding the death of Flusser, an attempt was made to board the ram, which was heroically resisted by as many of the crew as could be crowded on the top deck, who were supplied with loaded muskets passed up by their comrades below. The *Miami*, a powerful and very fast side-wheeler, succeeded in eluding the *Albemarle* without receiving a blow from her ram, and retired below Plymouth, into Albemarle Sound.*

Captain Cooke having successfully carried out his part of the programme, General Hoke attacked the fortifications the next morning and carried them; not, however, without heavy loss, Ransom's brigade alone leaving 500 dead and wounded on the field, in their most heroic charge upon the breastworks protecting the eastern front of the town. General Wessells, commanding the Federal forces, made a gallant resistance, and surrendered only when further effort would have been worse than useless. During the attack the *Albemarle* held the river front, according to contract, and all day long poured shot and shell into the resisting forts with her two guns.

On May 5, 1864, Captain Cooke left the Roanoke River with the *Albemarle* and two

tenders, the *Bombshell* and *Cotton Plant*, and entered the Sound with the intention of recovering, if possible, the control of the two Sounds, and ultimately of Hatteras Inlet. He proceeded about sixteen miles on an east-north-easterly course, when the Federal squadron, consisting of seven well-armed gun-boats, the *Mattabesett*, *Sassacus*, *Wyalusing*, *Whitehead*, *Miami*, *Commodore Hull*, and *Ceres*, all under the command of Captain Melancton Smith, hove in sight, and at 2 o'clock that afternoon approached in double line of battle, the *Mattabesett* being in advance. They proceeded to surround the *Albemarle*, and hurled at her their heaviest shot,† at distances averaging less than one hundred yards. The *Albemarle* responded effectively, but her boats were soon shot away, her smoke-stack was riddled, many iron plates in her shield were injured and broken, and the after-gun was broken off eighteen inches from the muzzle, and rendered useless. This terrible fire continued, without intermission, until about 5 p. m., when the commander of the double-ender *Sassacus* selected his opportunity, and with all steam on struck the *Albemarle* squarely just abaft her starboard beam, causing every timber in the vicinity of the blow to groan, though none gave way. The pressure from the revolving wheel of the *Sassacus* was so great that it forced the after deck of the ram several feet below the

* The following admirably clear and succinct account of the fight is given by Acting Master William N. Wells, of the *Miami*, in his report of April 23 to Admiral Lee:

"The siege commenced Sabbath afternoon, April 17, by an artillery fire upon Fort Gray. Early in the morning of April 18, between the hours of 3 and 5, the enemy tried to carry by storm Fort Gray, but were repulsed. In the afternoon of the 18th heavy artillery opened fire upon the town and breastworks. Then the fight became general. Up to this time the gun-boats *Southfield* and *Miami* were chained together in preparation to encounter the ram. They were then separated. The *Southfield*, moving up the river, opened fire over the town. The *Miami*, moving down the river, opened a cross-fire upon the enemy, who were charging upon Fort Williams. The firing, being very exact, caused the enemy to fall back. After three attempts to storm the fort, at 9 o'clock the firing ceased from the enemy, they having withdrawn from range. Commander Flusser dispatched a messenger to General Wessells to learn the result of the day's fight. The messenger returned at 10 p. m., having delivered the message, and bearing one from General Wessells to Commander Flusser, stating that the fire from the naval vessels was very satisfactory and effective — so much so that the advancing columns of the enemy broke and retreated; also desired that the *Miami* might be kept below the town to prevent a flank movement by the enemy. At 10:30 p. m., steamer *Southfield* came down and anchored near. At 12:20 a. m., April 19, the *Southfield* came alongside to rechain the two steamers as speedily as possible; the ram having been seen by Captain Barrett, of the *Whitehead*, and reported by him as coming down the river. At 3:45 a. m. the gun-boat *Ceres* came down, passing near, giving

the alarm that the ram was close upon her. I immediately hastened to acquaint Commander Flusser of the information. He immediately came on deck, and ordered both vessels to steam ahead as far as possible and run the ram down. No sooner than given was the order obeyed. Our starboard chain was slipped and bells rung to go ahead fast. In obedience to the order, the steamers were in one minute moving up the river, the ram making for us. In less than two minutes from the time she was reported, she struck us upon our port bow near the water-line, gouging two planks nearly through for ten feet; at the same time striking the *Southfield* with her prow upon the starboard bow, causing the *Southfield* to sink rapidly. As soon as the battery could be brought to bear upon the ram, both steamers, the *Southfield* and *Miami*, commenced firing solid shot from the 100-pound Parrott rifles and 11-inch Dahlgren guns; they making no perceptible indentations in her armor. Commander Flusser fired the first three shots personally from the *Miami*, the third being a ten-second Dahlgren shell, 11-inch. It was directly after that fire that he was killed by pieces of shell; several of the gun's crew were wounded at the same time. Our bow hawser being stranded, the *Miami* swung round to starboard, giving the ram a chance to pierce us. Necessity required the engine to be reversed in motion to straighten the vessel in the river, to prevent going upon the bank of the river, and to bring the rifle gun to bear upon the ram. During the time of straightening the steamer the ram had also straightened, and was making for us. From the fatal effects of her prow upon the *Southfield* and of our sustaining injury, I deemed it useless to sacrifice the *Miami* in the same way."

†The Union fleet had 32 guns and 23 howitzers, a total of 55.—EDITOR.

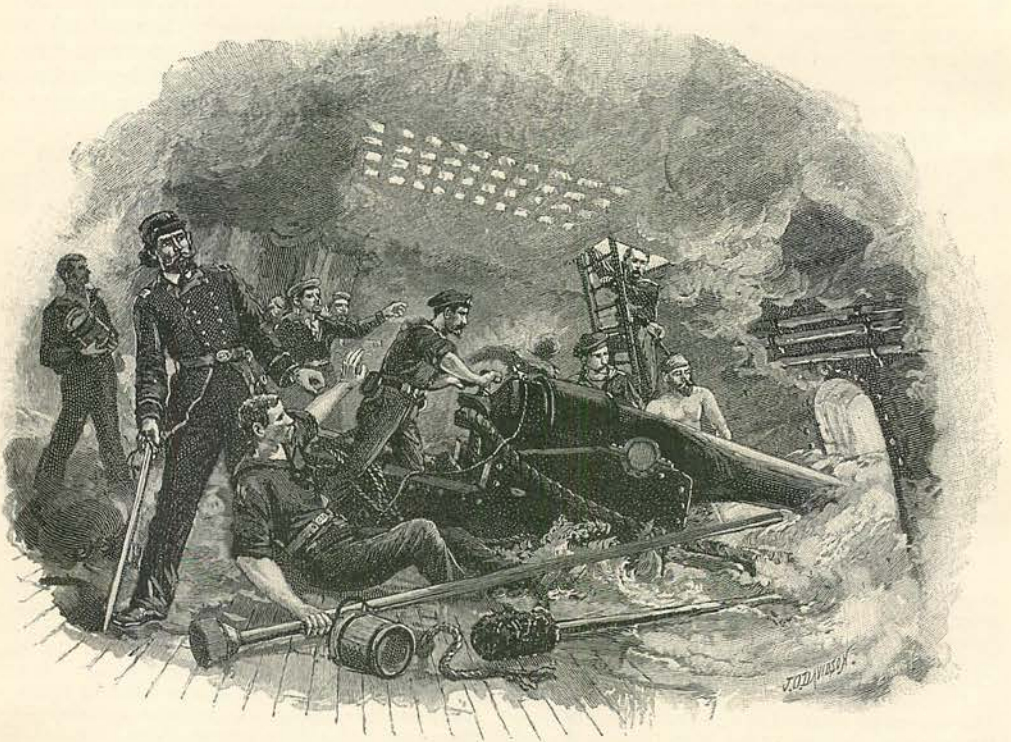
surface of the water, and created an impression on board that she was about to sink. Some of the crew became demoralized, but the calm voice of the undismayed captain checked the incipient disorder, with the command, "Stand to your guns, and if we must sink let us go down like brave men."

The *Albemarle* soon recovered, and sent a shot at her assailant which passed through one of the latter's boilers, the hissing steam disabling a number of the crew. Yet the discipline on the *Sassacus* was such that, notwithstanding the natural consternation under these appalling circumstances, two of her guns continued to fire on the *Albemarle* until she drifted out of the arena of battle. Two of the fleet attempted to foul the propellers of the ram with a large fishing-seine which they had previously procured for the purpose, but the line parted in paying it out. Then they tried to blow her up with a torpedo, but failed. No

equal conflict continued until night. Some of the Federal vessels were more or less disabled, and both sides were doubtless well content to draw off. Captain Cooke had on board a supply of bacon and lard, and this sort of fuel being available to burn without draught from a smoke-stack, he was able to make sufficient steam to get the boat back to Plymouth, where she tied up to her wharf covered with wounds and with glory.

The *Albemarle* in her different engagements was struck a great many times by shot and shell,* and yet but one man lost his life, and that was caused by a pistol-shot from the *Miami*, the imprudent sailor having put his head out of one of the port-holes to see what was going on outside.

Captain Cooke was at once promoted and placed in command of all the Confederate naval forces in eastern North Carolina. The *Albemarle* remained tied to her wharf at Plym-



INSIDE THE "ALBEMARLE" CASEMATE.

better success attended an effort to throw a keg of gunpowder down her smoke-stack, or what was left of it, for it was riddled with holes from shot and shell. This smoke-stack had lost its capacity for drawing, and the boat lay a helpless mass on the water. While in this condition every effort was made by her numerous enemies to destroy her. The un-

outh until the night of October 27, 1864, when Lieutenant William B. Cushing, of the United States Navy, performed the daring feat of destroying her with a torpedo. Having procured a torpedo-boat so constructed as to be very fast, for a short distance, and with the

* The upper section alone of the smoke-stack has 114 holes made by shot and shell.—G. E.

exhaust steam so arranged as to be noiseless, he proceeded, with a crew of fourteen men, up the Roanoke River. Guards had been stationed by the Confederate military commander on the wreck of the *Southfield*, whose top deck was then above water, but they failed to see the boat. A boom of logs had been arranged around the *Albemarle*, distant about thirty feet from her side. Captain Cooke had planned and superintended the construction of this arrangement before giving up the command of the vessel to Captain A. F. Warley. Cushing ran his boat up to these logs, and there, under a hot fire, lowered and exploded the torpedo under the *Albemarle's* bottom, causing her to settle down and finally to sink at the wharf. The torpedo-boat and crew were captured; but Cushing refusing to surrender, though twice called upon so to do, sprang into the river, dived to the bottom, and swam across to a swamp opposite the town, thus making his escape; and on the next night, after having experienced great suffering, wandering through the swamp, he succeeded in obtaining a small canoe, and made his way back to the fleet.

The river front being no longer protected, and no appliances for raising the sunken vessel



CAPTAIN ALEXANDER F. WARLEY, C. S. N.

being available, on October 31 the Federal forces attacked and captured the town of Plymouth.*

Gilbert Elliott.

II. THE "ALBEMARLE" AND THE "SASSACUS."

AN ATTEMPT TO RUN DOWN AN IRON-CLAD WITH A WOODEN SHIP.

THE United States steamer *Sassacus* was one of several wooden side-wheel ships, known as "double-enders," built for speed, light draught, and ease of manœuvre in battle, as they could go ahead or back with equal facility. She carried four 9-inch Dahlgren guns and two 100-pounder Parrott rifles. On the 5th of May, 1864, this ship, while engaged, together with the *Mattabesett*, *Wyalusing*, and several smaller vessels, with the Confederate iron-clad *Albemarle* in Albemarle Sound, was, under the command of Lieutenant-Commander F. A. Roe, and with all the speed attainable, driven down upon the ram, striking full and square at the junction of its armored roof and deck. It was the first attempt of the kind and deserves a place in history. This sketch is an endeavor to recall only the part taken in the engagement by the *Sassacus* in her attempt to run down the ram.

One can obtain a fair idea of the magnitude of such an undertaking by remembering that on a ship in battle you are on a floating target, through which the enemy's shell may bring not only the carnage of explosion but

an equally unpleasant visitor — the sea. To hurl this egg-shell target against a rock would be dangerous, but to hurl it against an iron-clad bristling with guns, or to plant it upon the muzzles of 100-pounder Brooke or Parrott rifles, with all the chances of a sheering off of the iron-clad, and a subsequent ramming process about which no two opinions ever existed, is more than dangerous.

On the 17th of April, 1864, Plymouth, N. C., was attacked by the Confederates by land and river. On the 20th it was captured, the ram *Albemarle* having sunk the *Southfield* and driven off the other Union vessels.

On the 5th of May the *Albemarle*, with the captured steamer *Bombshell*, and the steamer *Cotton Plant*, laden with troops, came down the river. The double-enders *Mattabesett*, *Sassacus*, *Wyalusing*, and *Miami*, together with the smaller vessels, *Whitehead*, *Ceres*, and *Commodore Hull*, steamed up to give battle.

The Union plan of attack was for the large vessels to pass as close as possible to the ram without endangering their wheels, deliver their fire, and then round to for a second discharge.

* The *Albemarle* was subsequently raised and towed to the Norfolk Navy Yard, and after being stripped

of her armament, machinery, etc., she was sold, Oct. 15, 1867, to J. N. Leonard & Co., for \$3200.—EDITOR.

The smaller vessels were to take care of thirty armed launches, which were expected to accompany the iron-clad. The *Miami* carried a torpedo to be exploded under the enemy, and a strong net or seine to foul her propeller.

All eyes were fixed on this second *Merrimac* as, like a floating fortress, she came down the bay. A puff of smoke from her bow port opened the ball, followed quickly by another, the shells aimed skillfully at the pivot-rifle of the leading ship, *Mattabesett*, cutting away



REAR-ADMIRAL F. A. ROE, U. S. N.

rail and spars, and wounding six men at the gun. The enemy then headed straight for her, in imitation of the *Merrimac*, but by a skillful management of the helm the *Mattabesett* rounded her bow,* closely followed by our own ship, the *Sassaous*, which at close quarters gave her a broadside of solid 9-inch shot. The guns might as well have fired blank cartridges, for the shot skimmed off into the air, and even the 100-pound solid shot from the pivot-rifle glanced from the sloping roof into space with no apparent effect. The feeling of helplessness that comes from the failure of heavy guns to make any mark on an advancing foe can never be described. One is like a man with a bodkin before a Gorgon or a Dragon, a man with straws before the wheels of Juggernaut.

To add to the feeling in this instance, the

*If the *Mattabesett* rounded the bow of the *Albemarle*, the latter must have been heading up the sound at the time; in other words, she must have turned previous to the advance of the Union fleet. Upon this point the reports of the captains of the double-enders give conflicting testimony. Commander Febiger rep-

resents the ram as retreating towards the Roanoke, while Lieutenant-Commander Roe describes her as in such a position that she would necessarily have been heading towards the advancing squadron. The conflict of opinion was doubtless due to the similarity in the two ends of the ram.—EDITOR.

rapid firing from the different ships, the clouds of smoke, the changes of position to avoid being run down, the watchfulness to get a shot into the ports of the ram, as they quickly opened to deliver their well-directed fire, kept alive the constant danger of our ships firing into or entangling each other. The crash of bulwarks and rending of exploding shells which were fired by the ram, but which it was utterly useless to fire from our own guns, gave confused sensations of a general and promiscuous mêlée, rather than a well-ordered attack; nevertheless the plan designed was being carried out, hopeless as it seemed. As our own ship delivered her broadside, and fired the pivot-rifle with great rapidity at roof, and port, and hull, and smoke-stack, trying to find a weak spot, the ram headed for us and narrowly passed our stern. She was foiled in this attempt, as we were under full headway, and swiftly rounding her with a hard-port helm, we delivered a broadside at her consort, the *Bombshell*, each shot hulling her. We now headed for the latter ship, going within hail.

Thus far in the action our pivot-rifle astern had had but small chance to fire, and the captain of the gun, a broad-shouldered, brawny fellow, was now wrought up to a pitch of desperation at holding his giant gun in leash, and as we came up to the *Bombshell* he mounted the rail, and, naked to the waist, he brandished a huge boarding-pistol and shouted, "Haul down your flag and surrender, or we 'll blow you out of the water!" The flag came down, and the *Bombshell* was ordered to drop out of action and anchor, which she did. Of this surrender I shall have more to say farther on.

Now came the decisive moment, for by this action, which was in reality a manoeuvre of our commander, we had acquired a distance from the ram of about four hundred yards, and the latter, to evade the *Mattabesett*, had sheered off a little and lay broadside to us. The Union ships were now on both sides of the ram with engines stopped. Commander Roe saw the opportunity, which an instant's delay would forfeit, and boldly met the crisis of the engagement. To the engineer he cried, "Crowd waste and oil in the fires and back slowly! Give her all the steam she can carry!" To Acting-Master Boutelle he said, "Lay her course for the junction of the casemate and the hull!" Then came four bells, and with full steam and open throttle the ship sprang forward like a living thing. It was a moment

of intense strain and anxiety. The guns ceased firing, the smoke lifted from the ram, and we saw that every effort was being made to evade the shock. Straight as an arrow we shot for-

ward to the designated spot. Then came the order, "All hands lie down!" and with a crash that shook the ship like an earthquake, we struck full and square on the iron hull, careen-

UNION FORCE IN THE ACTION IN ALBEMARLE SOUND, MAY 5, 1864.

CAPTAIN MELANCTON SMITH, COMMANDING.

DOUBLE-ENDERS: *Mattabesett*, Commander John C. Febiger; *Sassacus*, Lieutenant-Commander Francis A. Roe; *Wyalusing*, Lieutenant-Commander Walter W. Queen; *Miami*, Acting Volunteer Lieutenant Charles A. French. FERRY-BOAT: *Commodore Hull*, Acting Master Francis Josselyn. GUNBOATS: *Whitehead*, Acting Ensign G. W. Barrett; *Ceres*, Acting Master H. H. Foster.

VESSELS.	LOSS.			BATTERY.									
	Killed	Wounded.	Total.	GUNS.				HOWITZERS.					
				9-in. S. B.	100-pdr. R.	30-pdr. R.	20-pdr. R.	Total Guns.	24-pdr. S. B.	12-pdr. S. B.	12-pdr. R.	Total Howitzers.	Total Guns and Howitzers.
Mattabesett	2	6	8	4	2	..	..	6	2	1	1	4	10
Sassacus	1	19*	20	4	2	..	2	8	2	..	1	3	11
Wyalusing	1	0	1	4	2	..	..	6	4	2	2	8	14
Miami .....	..	..	..	6	1	..	..	7	1	..	..	1	8
Whitehead .....	..	..	..	..	1	..	..	1	3	..	..	3	4
Commodore Hull.....	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	2	4	..	..	4	6
Ceres .....	..	..	..	..	..	2	..	2	..	..	..	..	2
	4	25	29	18	8	2	4	32	16	3	4	23	55

* Thirteen of these were scalded.

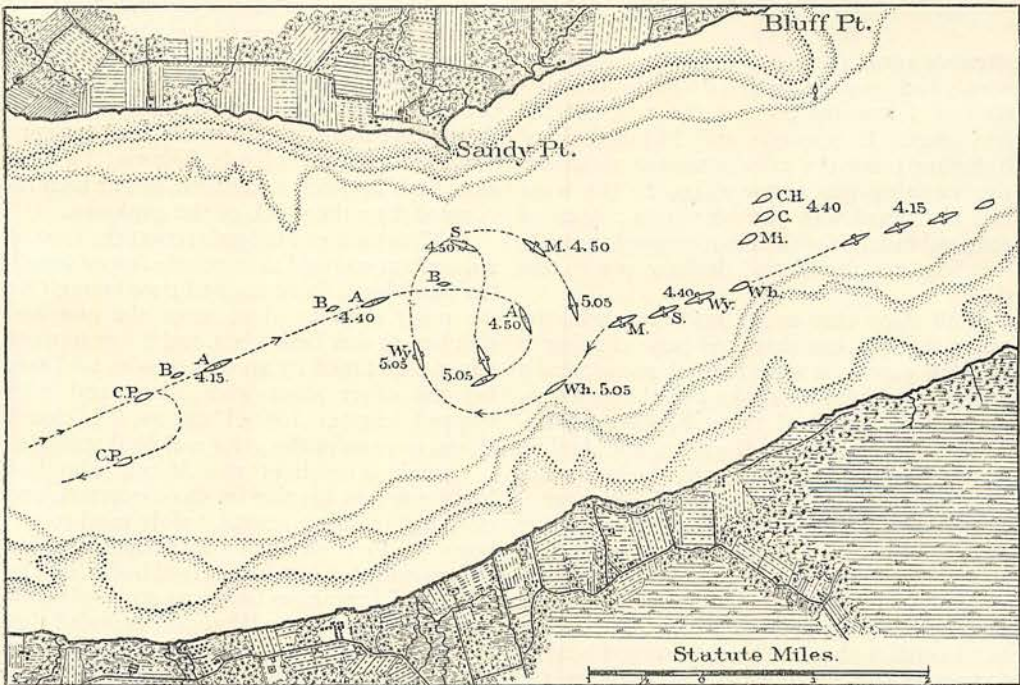


CHART OF THE ENGAGEMENT IN ALBEMARLE SOUND.

A, Albemarle; B, Bombshell; C P, Cotton Plant; M, Mattabesett; S, Sassacus; Wy, Wyalusing; Mi, Miami; C, Ceres; Wh, Whitehead; C H, Commodore Hull.

ing it over and tearing away our own bows, ripping and straining our timbers at the water-line. The enemy's lights were put out, and his men hurled from their feet, and, as we learned afterward, it was thought for a moment that it was all over with them. Our ship quivered for an instant, but held fast, and the swift splash of the paddles showed that the engines were uninjured. My own station was in the bow, on the main-deck, on a line with the



ACTING MASTER CHARLES A. BOUTELLE, U. S. N.

enemy's guns. Through the starboard shutter, which had been partly jarred off by the concussion, I saw the port of the ram not ten feet away. It opened; and like a flash of lightning I saw the grim muzzle of a cannon, the straining gun's-crew naked to the waist and blackened with powder; then a blaze, a roar and rush of the shell as it crashed through, whirling me round and dashing me to the deck.

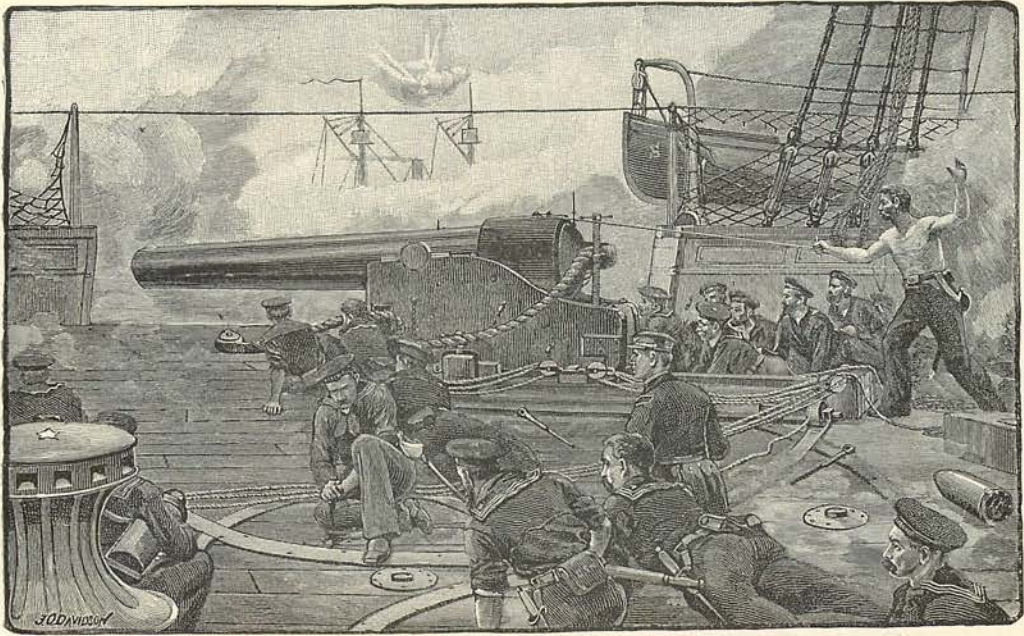
Both ships were under headway, and as the ram advanced, our shattered bows clinging to the iron casemate were twisted round, and a second shot from a Brooke gun almost touching our side crashed through, followed immediately by a cloud of steam and boiling water that filled the forward decks as our overcharged boilers, pierced by the shot, emptied their contents with a shrill scream that drowned for an instant the roar of the guns. The shouts of command and the cries of scalded, wounded, and blinded men mingled with the rattle of small-arms that told of a hand-to-hand conflict above. The ship surged heavily to port as the great weight of water in the boilers was expended, and over the cry, "The ship is sinking!" came the shout, "All hands repel boarders on starboard bow!"

The men below, wild with the boiling steam, sprang to the ladder with pistol and cutlass, and gained the bulwarks; but men in the rigging with muskets and hand grenades, and the well-directed fire from the crews of the guns, soon baffled the attempt of the Confederates to gain our decks. To send our crew on the grated top of the iron-clad would have been madness.

The horrid tumult, always characteristic of battle, was intensified by the cries of agony from the scalded and frantic men. Wounds may rend, and blood flow, and grim heroism keep the teeth set firm in silence; but to be boiled alive—to have the flesh drop from the face and hands, to strip off in sodden mass from the body as the clothing is torn away in savage eagerness for relief, will bring screams from the stoutest lips. In the midst of all this, when every man had left the engine room, our chief engineer, Mr. Hobby, although badly scalded, stood with heroism at his post; nor did he leave it till after the action, when he was brought up, blinded and helpless, to the deck. I had often before been in battle; had stepped over the decks of a steamer in the *Merrimac* fight when a shell had exploded, covering the deck with fragments of human bodies, literally tearing to pieces the men on the small vessel as she lay alongside the *Minnesota*, but never before had I experienced such a sickening sensation of horror as on this occasion, when the bow of the *Sassacus* lay for thirteen minutes on the roof of the *Albemarle*. An officer of the *Wyalusing* says that when the dense smoke and steam enveloped us they thought we had sunk, till the flash of our guns burst through the clouds, followed by flash after flash in quick succession as our men recovered from the shock of the explosion.

In Commander Febiger's report the time of our contact was said to be "some few minutes." To us, at least, there seemed time enough for the other ships to close in on the ram and sink her, or sink beside her, and it was thirteen minutes as timed by an officer, who told me; but the other ships were silent, and with stopped engines looked on as the clouds closed over us in the grim and final struggle.

Captain French of the *Miami*, who had bravely fought his ship at close quarters, and often at the ship's length, vainly tried to get bows on, to come to our assistance and use his torpedo; but his ship steered badly, and he was unable to reach us before we dropped away. In the mean time the *Wyalusing* signaled that she was sinking—a mistake, but one that affected materially the outcome of the battle. We struck exactly at the spot for which we had aimed; and, contrary to the diagram given in the naval report for that year, the headway of



"ALL HANDS LIE DOWN!"

both ships twisted our bows, and brought us broadside to broadside — our bows at the enemy's stern and our starboard paddle-wheel on the forward starboard angle of his casemate. Against the report mentioned, I not only place my own observation, but I have in my possession the written statement of the navigator, Boutelle, now a member of Congress from Maine.

At length we drifted off the ram, and our pivot-gun, which had been fired incessantly by Ensign Mayer, almost muzzle to muzzle with the enemy's guns, was kept at work till we were out of range.

The official report says that the other ships were then got in line and fired at the enemy, also attempting to lay the seine to foul his propeller — a task that proved, alas, as impracticable as that of injuring him by the fire of the guns. While we were alongside, and had drifted broadside to broadside, our 9-inch Dahlgren guns had been depressed till the shot would strike at right angles, and the solid iron would bound from the roof into the air like marbles, and with as little impression. Fragments even of our 100-pound rifle-shots, at close range, came back on our own decks.

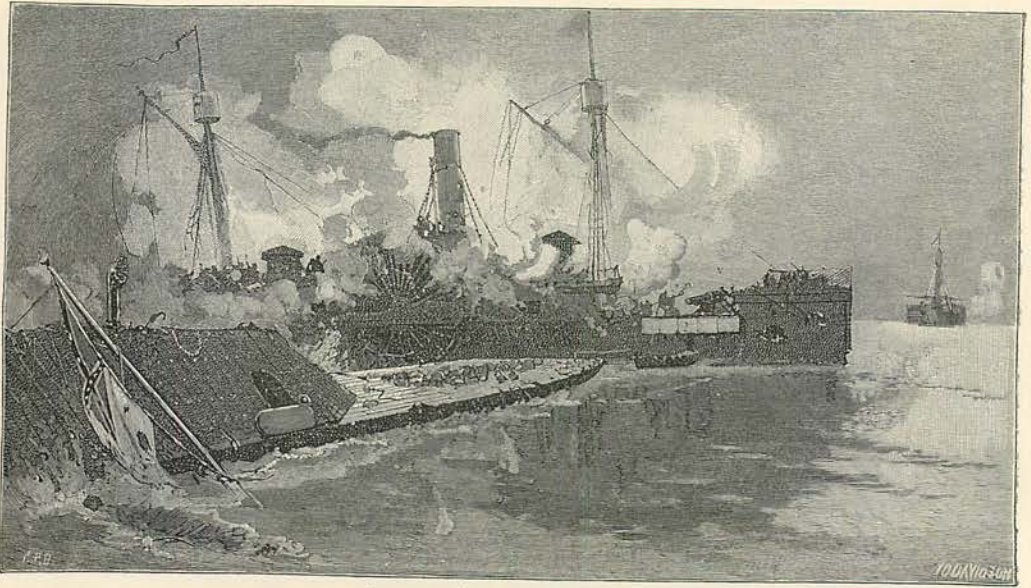
At dusk the ram steamed into the Roanoke River. Had assistance been rendered during the long thirteen minutes that the *Sassacus* lay over the ports of the *Albemarle*, the heroism of Commander Roe would have electrified the public and made his name, as it should be, imperishable in the annals of naval warfare. There was no lack of courage on the

other ships, and the previous loss of the *Southfield*, the signal from the *Wyalusing* that she was sinking, the apparent loss of our ship, and the loss of the sounds of North Carolina if more were disabled, dictated the prudent course they adopted.

Of the official reports, which gave no prominence to the achievement of Commander Roe and have placed an erroneous record on the page of history, I speak only with regret. He was asked to correct his report as to the speed of our ship. He had said we were going at a speed of ten knots, and the naval report says, "He was not disposed to make the original correction." I should think not! — when the speed could only be estimated by his own officers, and the navigator says clearly in his report *eleven* knots. We had perhaps the swiftest ship in the navy. We had backed slowly to increase the distance; with furious fires and a gagged engine working at the full stroke of the pistons, — a run of over four hundred yards, with eager and excited men counting the revolutions of our paddles; who should give the more correct statement?

The ship first in the line claimed the capture of the *Bombshell*. The captain of that vessel, afterward a prisoner on our ship, said he surrendered to the *second* ship in the line, viz., the *Sassacus*; that the flag was not hauled down till he was ordered to do so by Commander Roe; and that no surrender had been intended till the order came from the second vessel in the line.

Another part of the official report states that



THE "SASSACUS" DISABLED AFTER RAMMING.

the bows of the double-enders were all frail, and had they been armed would have been insufficient to have sunk the ram. If this were so, then was the heroism of the trial the greater. Our bow, however, was shod with a *bronze beak*, weighing fully three tons, well secured to prow and keel; and this was twisted and almost entirely torn away in the collision.

But what avails it to a soldier to dash over the parapet and seize the colors of the enemy if his regiment halts outside the *chevaux-de-*

frise? We have always felt that a similar blow on the other side, or a close environment of the heavy guns of the other ships, would have captured or sunk the ram. As it was, she retired, never again to emerge for battle from the Roanoke River, and the object of her coming on the day of our engagement, viz., to aid the Confederates in an attack on New Berne, was defeated; but her ultimate destruction was reserved for the gallant Lieutenant Cushing, of glorious memory.

Edgar Holden, M. D., late U. S. N.

NOTE. The Navy Department was not satisfied with the first official reports, and new and special reports were called for. As a result of investigation, promotions of many of the officers were made.—EDITOR.

THE DESTRUCTION OF THE "ALBEMARLE."

UNPUBLISHED MANUSCRIPT BY THE LATE W. B. CUSHING, COMMANDER, U. S. N.

IN September, 1864, the Government was laboring under much anxiety in regard to the condition of affairs in the sounds of North Carolina. Some months previous (April 19th) a rebel iron-clad had made her appearance, attacking Plymouth, beating our fleet, sinking the *Southfield*, and killing the gallant Captain Flusser, who commanded the flotilla. General Wessells's brigade had been forced to surrender, and all that section of country and the line of Roanoke River had fallen again into rebel hands. Little Washington and the Tar River were thus outflanked and lost to us. Some time after (May 5th), this iron-clad, the *Albemarle*, had steamed out into the open sound and engaged seven of our steamers, doing much dam-

age and suffering little. The *Sassacus* had attempted to run her down, but had failed, and had had her boiler exploded by one of the 100-pound shells fired from the Confederate.

The Government had no iron-clad that could cross Hatteras bar and enter the sounds,* and it seemed likely that our wooden ships would be defeated, leaving New Berne, Roanoke Island, and other points endangered. At all events, it was impossible for any number of our vessels to injure her at Plymouth, and the expense of our squadron kept to watch her was very great.

At this stage of affairs Admiral S. P. Lee

* Several light-draught monitors were in course of construction at this time, but were not yet completed.—ED.

spoke to me of the case, when I proposed a plan for her capture or destruction. I submitted in writing two plans, either of which I was willing to undertake.

The first was based upon the fact that through a thick swamp the iron-clad might be approached to within a few hundred yards, whence India-rubber boats, to be inflated, and carried upon men's backs, might transport a boarding-party of a hundred men; in the second plan the offensive force was to be conveyed in two low-pressure and very small steamers, each armed with a torpedo and howitzer.

In this last named plan (which had my preference), I intended that one boat should dash in, while the other stood by to throw canister and renew the attempt if the first should fail. It would also be useful to pick up our men if the attacking boat were disabled. Admiral Lee believed that the plan was a good one, and ordered me to Washington to submit it to the Secretary of the Navy. Mr. Fox, Assistant Secretary of the Navy, doubted the merit of the project, but concluded to order me to New York to "purchase suitable vessels."

Finding some boats building for picket duty, I selected two, and proceeded to fit them out. They were open launches, about thirty feet in length, with small engines, and propelled by a screw. A 12-pounder howitzer was fitted to the bow of each, and a boom was rigged out, some fourteen feet in length, swinging by a goose-neck hinge to the bluff of the bow. A topping lift, carried to a stanchion inboard, raised or lowered it, and the torpedo was fitted into an iron slide at the end. This was intended to be detached from the boom by means of a heel-jigger leading inboard, and to be exploded by another line, connecting with a pin, which held a grape-shot over a nipple and cap. The torpedo was the invention of Engineer Lay of the navy, and was introduced by Chief-Engineer Wood.

Everything being completed, we started to the southward, taking the boats through the canals to Chesapeake Bay, and losing one in going down to Norfolk. This was a great misfortune, and I have never understood how it occurred. I forget the name of the volunteer ensign to whose care it was intrusted; he was taken prisoner with his crew.

My best boat being thus lost, I proceeded with one alone to make my way through the Chesapeake and Albemarle canals into the sound.

Half-way through, the canal was filled up, but finding a small creek that emptied into it below the obstruction, I endeavored to feel

my way through. Encountering a mill-dam, we waited for high water, and ran the launch over it; below she grounded, but I got a flat-boat, and, taking out gun and coal, succeeded in two days in getting her through. Passing with but seven men through the canal, where for thirty miles there was no guard or Union inhabitant, I reached the sound, and ran before a gale of wind to Roanoke Island. Here I pretended that we were going to Beaufort, and engaged to take two passengers along. This deception became necessary, in consequence of the close proximity of the rebel forces. If any person had known our destination, the news would have reached Plymouth long before we arrived to confirm it.

So, in the middle of the night, I steamed off into the darkness, and in the morning was out of sight. Fifty miles up the sound, I found the fleet anchored off the mouth of the river, and awaiting the ram's appearance. Here, for the first time, I disclosed to my officers and



COMMANDER W. B. CUSHING, U. S. N.

men our object, and told them that they were at liberty to go or not, as they pleased. These, seven in number, all volunteered. One of them, Mr. Howarth of the *Monticello*, had been with me repeatedly in expeditions of peril. Eight were added to my original force, among whom was Assistant Paymaster Francis H. Swan, who came to me as we were about to start and urged that he might go, as he had never been in a fight. Disregarding my remark that "it was a bad time for initiation," he still made the request, and joined us. He found an event-

ful night of it, being wounded, and spending his next four months in Libby Prison.

The Roanoke River is a stream averaging 150 yards in width, and quite deep. Eight miles from the mouth was the town of Plymouth, where the ram was moored. Several thousand soldiers occupied town and forts, and held both banks of the stream. A mile below the ram was the wreck of the *Southfield*, with hurricane deck above water, and on this a guard was stationed, to give notice

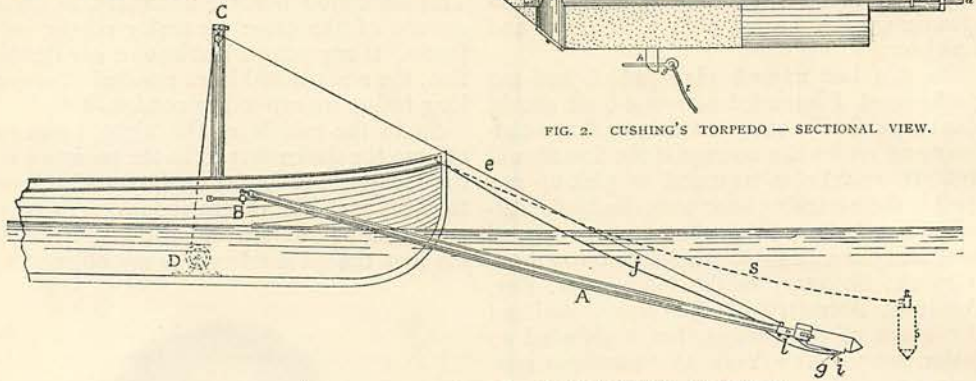


FIG. 1. CUSHING'S LAUNCH AND TORPEDO—SHOWING METHOD OF WORKING.

A long spar A (Fig. 1) was pivoted by means of a universal joint on its inboard end into the bracket B, the bracket being securely fastened to the outside of the boat. The spar was raised or lowered by means of a haliard *e*, which passed through a block at the head of the stanchion C, and thence down to the drum of a small windlass D, situated in the bottom of the boat, directly abaft the stanchion. On the outboard end of the spar was a socket, or head, which carried the shell. The shell was held in place only by a small pin *g*, which passed through a lug *l*, protruding from the lower side of the shell, and thence through an inclined plane *z*, which was attached to the socket. The lug and pin are clearly shown in Fig. 2. To detach the shell the pin *g* was pulled, which forced the shell gently out of the socket. This was accomplished by a haliard *j*, which led from the boat to the head of the socket, passing back of the head of the shell through the lugs *aa*, so that when the haliard was tightened it would force the shell out. A smaller haliard *l*, leading to the pin *g*, was spliced to the haliard *j* in such a manner that when the haliard *j* was pulled, first the pin and then the shell would come out.

of anything suspicious, and to send up fire-rockets in case of an attack. Thus it seemed impossible to surprise them, or to attack, with hope of success.

Impossibilities are for the timid: we determined to overcome all obstacles. On the night of the 27th of October* we entered the river, taking in tow a small cutter with a few men, the duty of whom was to dash aboard the [wreck of the] *Southfield* at the first hail, and prevent any rocket from being ignited.

Fortune was with our little boat, and we actually passed within thirty feet of the pickets without discovery and neared the wharf, where the rebels lay all unconscious. I now thought that it might be better to board her, and "take

* The first attempt was made on the previous night, but after proceeding a short distance the launch grounded, and the time lost in getting her off made it too late to carry out the purpose of the expedition.—EDITOR.

her alive," having in the two boats twenty men well armed with revolvers, cutlasses, and hand-grenades. To be sure, there were ten times our number on the ship and thousands near by; but a surprise is everything, and I thought if her fasts were cut at the instant of boarding, we might overcome those on board, take her

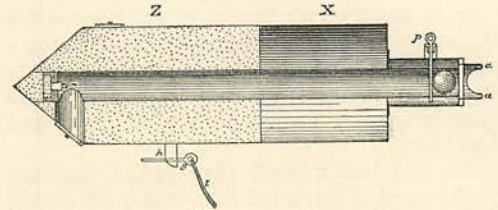


FIG. 2. CUSHING'S TORPEDO—SECTIONAL VIEW.

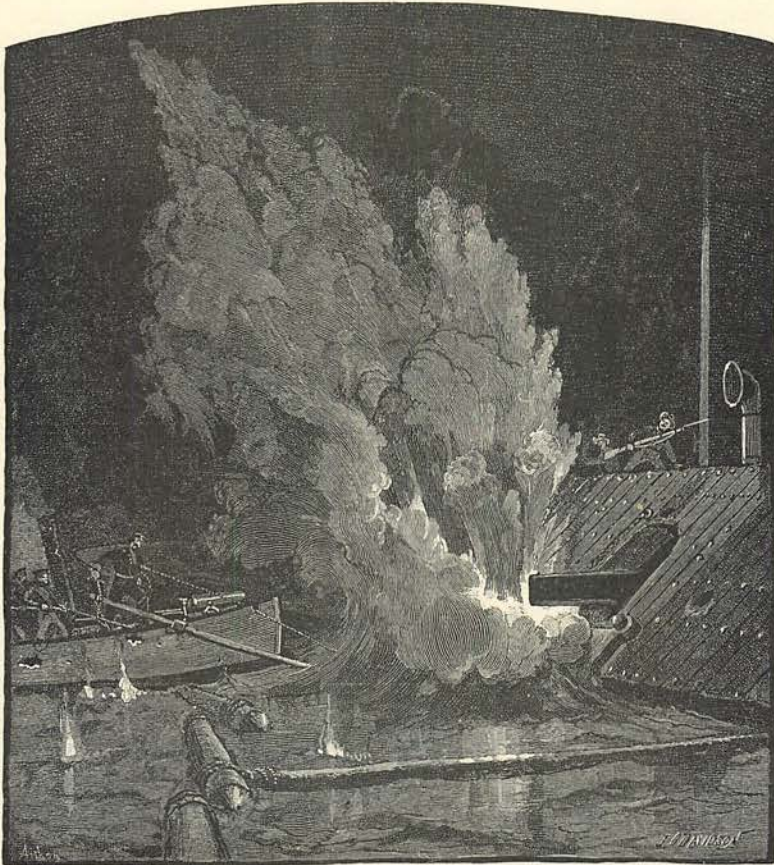
The shell (Fig. 2) contained an air chamber X and a powder chamber Z. The result of this arrangement was that when the shell was detached it assumed a vertical position, with the air chamber uppermost, and, being lighter than its volume of water, it floated gradually towards the surface. At the top of its central shaft or tube was a grape-shot, held in place by a pin *p*, to which was attached the haliard *s*. The pin was a trigger, and the haliard was known as the trigger-line. Upon pulling the haliard the pin came out, the shot fell by its own weight upon the nipple *n*, which was covered by a percussion cap and connected directly with the powder chamber, and the torpedo exploded.

When the spar was not in use it was swung around by means of a stern line, bringing the head of the spar to the stern of the boat. To use the apparatus, the shell was put in place and the spar was swung around head forward; it was then lowered by means of the haliard *e* to the required depth; the haliard *j* was pulled, withdrawing the pin *g*, and forcing out the shell; finally, when the floating shell had risen to its place, the trigger-line *s* was pulled and the torpedo fired.

into the stream, and use her iron sides to protect us afterward from the forts. Knowing the town, I concluded to land at the lower wharf, creep around and suddenly dash aboard from the bank; but just as I was sheering in close to the wharf, a hail came, sharp and quick, from the iron-clad, and in an instant was repeated. I at once directed the cutter to cast off, and go down to capture the guard left in our rear, and ordering all steam went at the dark mountain of iron in front of us. A heavy fire was at once opened upon us, not only from the ship, but from men stationed on the shore. This did not disable us, and we neared them rapidly. A large fire now blazed upon the bank, and by its light I discovered the unfortunate fact that there was a circle of logs around the *Albemarle*, boomed well out from her side, with the very intention of preventing the action of torpedoes. To examine them more closely,

I ran alongside until amidships, received the enemy's fire, and sheered off for the purpose of turning, a hundred yards away, and going at

against the iron ribs and into the mass of men standing by the fire upon the shore. In another instant we had struck the logs and were



THE BLOWING-UP OF THE "ALBEMARLE."

the booms squarely, at right angles, trusting to their having been long enough in the water to have become slimy—in which case my boat, under full headway, would bump up against them and slip over into the pen with the ram. This was my only chance of success, and once over the obstruction my boat would never get out again; but I was there to accomplish an important object, and to die, if needs be, was but a duty. As I turned, the whole back of my coat was torn out by buck-shot, and the sole of my shoe was carried away. The fire was very severe.

In a lull of the firing, the captain hailed us, again demanding what boat it was. All my men gave some comical answers, and mine was a dose of canister, which I sent among them from the howitzer, buzzing and singing

over, with headway nearly gone, slowly forging up under the enemy's quarter-port. Ten feet from us the muzzle of a rifle gun looked into our faces, and every word of command on board was distinctly heard.

My clothing was perforated with bullets as I stood in the bow, the heel-jigger in my right hand and the exploding-line in the left. We were near enough then, and I ordered the boom lowered until the forward motion of the launch carried the torpedo under the ram's overhang. A strong pull of the detaching-line, a moment's waiting for the torpedo to rise under the hull, and I hauled in the left hand, just cut by a bullet.*

The explosion took place at the same instant that 100 pounds of grape, at 10 feet range, crashed in our midst, and the dense

* In considering the merits of Cushing's success with this exceedingly complicated instrument, it must be remembered that nothing short of the utmost care in

preparation could keep its mechanism in working-order; that in making ready to use it, it was necessary to keep the end of the spar elevated until the boat had

mass of water thrown out by the torpedo came down with choking weight upon us.

Twice refusing to surrender, I commanded the men to save themselves; and throwing off sword, revolver, shoes, and coat, struck out from my disabled and sinking boat into the river. It was cold, long after the frosts, and the water chilled the blood, while the whole surface of the stream was plowed up by grape and musketry, and my nearest friends, the fleet, were twelve miles away, but anything was better than to fall into rebel hands. Death was better than surrender. I swam for the opposite shore, but as I neared it a man,* one of my crew, gave a great gurgling yell and went down.

The rebels were out in boats, picking up my men; and one of these, attracted by the sound, pulled in my direction. I heard my own name mentioned, but was not seen. I now "struck out" down the stream, and was soon far enough away to again attempt landing. This time, as I struggled to reach the bank, I heard a groan in the river behind me, and, although very much exhausted, concluded to turn and give all the aid in my power to the officer or seaman who had bravely shared the danger with me and in whose peril I might in turn partake.

Swimming in the night, with eye at the level of the water, one can have no idea of distance, and labors, as I did, under the discouraging thought that no headway is made. But if I were to drown that night, I had at least an opportunity of dying while struggling to aid another. Nearing the swimmer, it proved to be Acting Master's Mate Woodman, who said that he could swim no longer. Knocking his cap from his head, I used my right arm to sustain him, and ordered him to strike out. For ten minutes at least, I think, he managed to keep afloat, when, his presence of mind and physical force being completely gone, he gave a yell and sunk like a stone, fortunately not seizing upon me as he went down.

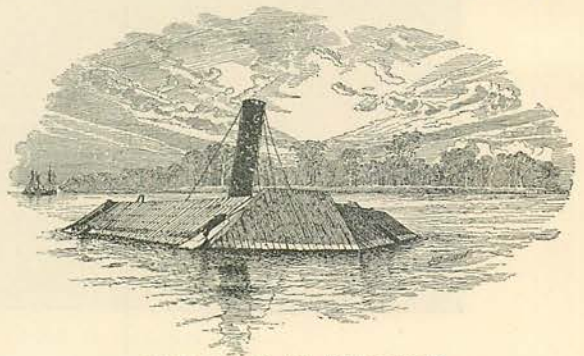
Again alone upon the water, I directed my

surmounted the boom of logs, and to judge accurately the distance in order to stop the boat's headway at the right point; that the spar must then be lowered with the same precision of judgment; that the detaching laniard must then be pulled firmly, but without a jerk; that, finally, the position of the torpedo under the knuckle of the ram must be calculated to a nicety, and that by a very gentle strain on a line some twenty-five or thirty feet long the trigger-pin must be withdrawn. When it is reflected that Cushing had attached to his person four separate lines, viz., the detaching laniard, the trigger-line, and two lines to direct the movements of the boat, one of which was fastened to the wrist and the other to the ankle of the engineer; that he was also directing the adjustment of the spar

course towards the town side of the river, not making much headway, as my strokes were now very feeble, my clothes being soaked and heavy, and little chop-seas splashing with a choking persistence into my mouth every time that I gasped for breath. Still, there was a determination not to sink, a will not to give up; and I kept up a sort of mechanical motion long after my bodily force was in fact expended.

At last, and not a moment too soon, I touched the soft mud, and in the excitement of the first shock I half raised my body and made one step forward; then fell, and remained half in the mud and half in the water until daylight, unable even to crawl on hands and knees, nearly frozen, with brain in a whirl, but with one thing strong in me—the fixed determination to escape. The prospect of drowning, starvation, death in the swamps—all seemed lesser evils than that of surrender.

As day dawned, I found myself in a point of swamp that enters the suburbs of Plymouth, and not forty yards from one of the forts. The sun came out bright and warm, proving a



THE WRECK OF THE "ALBEMARLE."

most cheering visitant, and giving me back a good portion of the strength of which I had been deprived before. Its light showed me the town swarming with soldiers and sailors, who moved about excitedly, as if angry at some sudden shock. It was a source of satisfaction to me to know that I had pulled the

by the halliard; that the management of all these lines, requiring as much exactness and delicacy of touch as a surgical operation, where a single error in their employment, even a pull too much or too little, would render the whole expedition abortive, was carried out under a fire of musketry so hot that several bullets passed through his clothing and directly in front of the muzzle of a 100-pounder rifle, and carried out with perfect success, it is safe to say that the naval history of the world affords no other example of such marvelous coolness and professional skill as that shown by Cushing in the destruction of the *Albemarle*.—J. R. SOLEY.

* Samuel Higgins, fireman.

wire that set all these figures moving (in a manner quite as interesting as the best of the-atrials), but as I had no desire of being discovered by any of the rebs who were so plentiful around me, I did not long remain a spectator. My first object was to get into a dry fringe of rushes that edged the swamp; but to do this required me to pass over thirty or forty feet of open ground, right under the eye of the sentinel who walked the parapet.

Watching until he turned for a moment, I made a dash to cross the space, but was only half-way over when he turned, and forced me to drop down right between two paths, and almost entirely unshielded. Perhaps I was unobserved because of the mud that covered me, and made me blend in with the earth; at all events the soldier continued his tramp for some time, while I, flat on my back, awaited another chance for action. Soon a party of four men came down the path at my right, two of them being officers, and passed so close to me as almost to tread upon my arm. They were conversing upon the events of the previous night, and were wondering "how it was done," entirely unconscious of the presence of one who could give them the information. This proved to me the necessity of regaining the swamp, which I did by sinking my heels and elbows into the earth and forcing my body, inch by inch, towards it. For five hours then, with bare feet, head, and hands, I made my way where I venture to say none ever did before, until I came at last to a clear place, where I might rest upon solid ground. The cypress swamp was a network of thorns and briars, that cut into the flesh at every step like knives, and frequently, when the soft mire would not bear my weight, I was forced to throw my body upon it at length, and haul it along by the arms. Hands and feet were raw when I reached the clearing, and yet my difficulties were but commenced. A working-party of soldiers was in the opening, engaged in sinking some schooners in the river to obstruct the channel. I passed twenty yards in their rear through a corn furrow, and gained some woods below. Here I encountered a negro, and after serving out to him twenty dollars in greenbacks and some texts of Scripture (two powerful arguments with an old darky), I had confidence enough in his fidelity to send him into town for news of the ram.

When he returned, and there was no longer doubt that she had gone down, I went on again, and plunged into a swamp so thick that I had only the sun for a guide and could not see ten feet in advance. About 2 o'clock in the afternoon I came out from the dense mass of reeds upon the bank of one of the deep,

narrow streams that abound there, and right opposite to the only road in the vicinity. It seemed providential that I should come just there, for, thirty yards above or below, I never should have seen the road, and might have struggled on until worn out and starved—found a never-to-be-discovered grave. As it was, my fortune had led me to where a picket party of seven soldiers were posted, having a little flat-bottomed, square-ended skiff toggled to the root of a cypress-tree that squirmed like a snake into the inky water. Watching them until they went back a few yards to eat, I crept into the stream and swam over, keeping the big tree between myself and them, and making for the skiff.

Gaining the bank, I quietly cast loose the boat and floated behind it some thirty yards around the first bend, where I got in and paddled away as only a man could where liberty was at stake.

Hour after hour I paddled, never ceasing for a moment, first on one side, then on the other, while sunshine passed into twilight and that was swallowed up in thick darkness, only relieved by the few faint star rays that penetrated the heavy swamp curtain on either side. At last I reached the mouth of the Roanoke, and found the open sound before me.

My frail boat could not have lived a moment in the ordinary sea there, but it chanced to be very calm, leaving only a slight swell, which was, however, sufficient to influence my boat, so that I was forced to paddle all upon one side to keep her on the intended course.

After steering by a star for perhaps two hours for where I thought the fleet might be, I at length discovered one of the vessels, and after a long time got within hail. My "Ship ahoy!" was given with the last of my strength, and I fell powerless, with a splash, into the water in the bottom of my boat, and awaited results. I had paddled every minute for ten successive hours, and for four my body had been "asleep," with the exception of my two arms and brain. The picket vessel, *Valley City*,—for it was she,—upon hearing the hail at once slipped her cable and got under way, at the same time lowering boats and taking precaution against torpedoes.

It was some time before they would pick me up, being convinced that I was the rebel conductor of an infernal machine, and that Lieutenant Cushing had died the night before.

At last I was on board, had imbibed a little brandy and water, and was on my way to the flag-ship, commanded by Commander Macomb.

As soon as it became known that I had returned, rockets were thrown up and all hands

called to cheer ship; and when I announced success, all the commanding officers were summoned on board to deliberate upon a plan of attack.

In the morning I was again well in every way, with the exception of hands and feet, and had the pleasure of exchanging shots with the batteries that I had inspected on the day previous.

I was sent in the *Valley City* to report to Admiral Porter at Hampton Roads, and soon after Plymouth and the whole district of the Albemarle, deprived of the iron-clad's protection, fell an easy prey to Commander Macomb and our fleet.*

I again received the congratulations of the Navy Department, and the thanks of Congress, and was also promoted to the grade of Lieutenant-Commander.

Engineer-in-Chief William W. Wood, of the United States Navy, in describing the construction and fitting out of the launch with which Captain Cushing blew up the *Albemarle*, says:

When I was on duty in New York in connection with the construction of the iron-clad fleet and other vessels, I was also engaged in devising means to destroy the Confederate iron-clads, and to remove the harbor obstructions improvised by the Southerners to prevent

* Lieutenant Cushing reached the *Valley City* about midnight on the night of October 28-29, and announced the destruction of the *Albemarle*. On the next day, the 29th, at 11.15 A. M., Commander Macomb got under way, and his fleet proceeded up the Roanoke River in the following order: *Commodore Hull*, *Shamrock* (flag-ship), *Chicopee*, *Otsego*, *Wyalusing*, and *Tacony*; the *Valley City* being sent at the same time up Middle River, which joined the Roanoke above Plymouth, to intercept any vessels coming out with stores. Upon the arrival of the fleet at the wreck of the *Southfield*, after exchanging shots with the lower batteries, it was found that the enemy had effectually obstructed the channel by sinking schooners alongside of the wreck, and the expedition was therefore compelled to return. The *Valley City*, hearing the firing cease, concluded that Plymouth had been captured, and continuing her course up Middle River reached the Roanoke; but on approaching the enemy's works, and learning her mistake, she withdrew as she had come. It was upon her course up Middle River, shortly after noon, that the *Valley City* picked up Houghton, the only member of the crew of the picket-boat, beside Cushing, who escaped death or capture. He had swum across the river, and had remained hidden for thirty-six hours in the swamp that separates the two streams.

On the next day, Commander Macomb, having ascertained from the experience of the *Valley City* that Middle River offered a clear passage, determined to approach Plymouth by that route. The fleet was preceded by the tug *Basley*, with Pilot Alfred Everett, of the *Wyalusing*, on board. Following the *Basley* were the *Shamrock*, *Otsego*, *Wyalusing*, *Tacony*, and *Commodore Hull*. The *Valley City* had been detailed to take Lieutenant Cushing to Hampton Roads, and the *Chicopee* had gone to New Berne for repairs. The expedition threaded successfully the channel, shelling Plymouth across the woods on the intervening neck of

access of our vessels to the harbors and approaches in Southern waters.

About this time experiment had developed the feasibility of using torpedoes from the bows of ordinary steam-launches, and there had been already two such launches constructed, which were then lying at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, N. Y., having torpedoes fitted to them.

While sitting at my desk at the iron-clad office in Canal street, New York (the office of Rear-Admiral F. H. Gregory, the general superintendent), a young man (a mere youth) came in and made himself known as Lieutenant W. B. Cushing, United States Navy.

He stated to me, in strict confidence, that he was North on a secret mission, under the sanction of the Honorable Secretary of the Navy, the object being to cut out or destroy the rebel iron-clad ram *Albemarle*, then lying at Plymouth, N. C., and he had been looking for small and swift low-pressure tug-boats for the purpose of throwing a force on board, capturing, and cutting her out, and that, should he fail in this object, to destroy her; that so far he had been unable to find just such vessels as he required; and, further, he had been at the Navy Yard and there saw a steam-launch being fitted with a torpedo, and had called on me to make inquiry as to what was designed to be accomplished by its use, etc.

I gave him all the particulars and urged him to avail himself of the opportunity presented, which he without hesitation did. He sat down at my desk and wrote to the Secretary, stating that he had found what he desired for his purpose, and requested an order from the Department to be furnished with two of the torpedo boats or launches; and in going out said: "I will visit my mother at Fredonia, N. Y., and when they are ready inform me, and I will come down and learn how to use this thing."

land on its way up, until it reached the head of Middle River and passed into the Roanoke, where it lay all night.

At 9.30 on the morning of the 31st of October the line was formed, the *Commodore Hull* being placed in advance, as her ferry-boat construction enabled her to fire ahead. The *Whitehead*, which had arrived with stores just before the attack, was lashed to the *Tacony*, and the tugs *Basley* and *Belle* to the *Shamrock* and *Otsego*, to afford motive power in case of accident to the machinery. Signal was made to "Go ahead fast," and soon after 11 the fleet was hotly engaged with the batteries on shore, which were supported by musketry from rifle-pits and houses. After a spirited action of an hour at short range, receiving and returning a sharp fire of shell, grape, and canister, the *Shamrock* planted a shell in the enemy's magazine, which blew up, and the Confederates hastily abandoned their works. A landing-party was at once sent ashore and occupied the batteries, capturing the last of the retreating garrison. In a short time Plymouth was entirely in possession of the Union forces. Twenty-two cannon were captured, with a large quantity of small-arms, stores, and ammunition. The casualties on the Union side were six killed and nine wounded.

The vessels engaged were as follows: DOUBLE-ENDERS: *Shamrock*, Commander W. H. Macomb, commanding division, Lieutenant Rufus K. Duer, executive officer; *Otsego*, Lieutenant-Commander H. N. T. Arnold; *Wyalusing*, Lieutenant-Commander Earl English; *Tacony*, Lieutenant-Commander W. T. Truxtun. FERRY-BOAT: *Commodore Hull*, Acting-Master Francis Josselyn. GUN-BOAT: *Whitehead*, Acting-Master G. W. Barrett. TUGS: *Belle*, Acting-Master James G. Green; *Basley*, Acting-Master Mark D. Ames. The *Chicopee*, Commander A. D. Harrell, and *Valley City*, Acting-Master J. A. J. Brooks, as already stated, were not present at the second and final demonstration.—J. R. SOLEY.

I did so. Lieutenant Cushing came to New York, the launch was taken out into the North River, and one or more torpedo shells exploded by Lieutenant Cushing himself.

We stopped at the same hotel (the old United States, corner of Pearl and Fulton streets) until his departure, where I became well acquainted with this gallant and brave officer, and discussed frequently the resources of the torpedo steam-launches.

I was not disappointed when, a short time afterwards, Barry, the clerk of the hotel, told me one morning on my making my appearance that "Cushing had done the work," and handed me the morning paper containing Cushing's report to the Honorable Secretary of the Navy.

The dimensions of these two launches were as follows: 45 to 47 feet long; 9 feet 6 inches beam, and carried a howitzer forward. Draught of water, about 40 to 42 inches.*

Cushing's visit to his mother, referred to by Engineer-in-Chief Wood, is thus described by Mrs. Cushing:

Well do I remember that dreary day in the fall of 1864 when Will, home on a brief visit, invited me to ride with him over the Arkwright hills; the only time I was there, but in memory forever associated with the destruction of the *Albemarle*. It was a dark, cloudy day, and looked lonely; but where no one could hear or see us Will said to me, "Mother, I have undertaken a great project, and no soul must know until it is accomplished. I *must* tell you, for I need your prayers." He then informed me that the Navy Department had commissioned him to destroy the rebel ram *Albemarle*. How, when, and where, he told me all particulars, while I tried to still the beatings of my heart and listen in silence. At last I said, "My son, I believe you will accomplish it, but you *cannot* come out alive. Why did they call upon you to do this?" I felt that it was asking too much. "Mother, it shall be done or you will have no son Will. If I die, it will be in a good cause." After that I spoke only words of encouragement, but, oh! those days of suspense, shared by no one, every hour an age of agony, until from my son Howard came the glad telegram, "William is safe and successful."

NOTE ON THE DESTRUCTION OF THE "ALBEMARLE."

BY HER CAPTAIN, A. F. WARLEY, C. S. N.

WHEN I took command of the Confederate States iron-clad *Albemarle*, I found her made fast to the river bank nearly abreast of the town of Plymouth. She was surrounded by a cordon of single cypress logs chained together, about ten feet from her side.

I soon found why the very able officer whom I succeeded (Captain J. N. Maffitt) was willing to give up the command. There was no reason why the place might not be recaptured any day: the guns commanding the river were in no condition for use, and the troops in charge of them were worn down by ague, and were undrilled and worthless.

On the other side of the river, at pistol range, was a low island heavily timbered, and said to be almost impenetrable. As it fully commanded our position, I sent an active officer with a few hardy men to "explore it."

* The two "picket-boats," as they were officially designated, were delivered completely fitted to Lieutenant Cushing, in New York, on the 20th of September, by Admiral F. H. Gregory, Superintendent of Construction, with orders to send them directly to Hampton Roads by way of the canals. Cushing, not having any desire to make a canal voyage in an open launch, had obtained permission to proceed by land. Picket-boat No. 1 was under the command of Acting Ensign William L. Howarth, and No. 2 under Acting Ensign Andrew Stockholm. The two boats left New York on the 22d. Both of them struck on the rocks near Bergen Point, N. J., and remained there sunk for some hours. They arrived on the 25th, badly damaged, at New Brunswick, where they were repaired. No. 2 sank again in the canal, and was again repaired in Philadelphia, where the boats arrived on the 28th. Leaving Philadelphia, they reached Baltimore in safety; and after having been inspected by Cushing, they resumed their voyage on the 4th of October down Chesapeake Bay.

Soon after leaving Baltimore, No. 1's engine broke down, and she was towed into Annapolis by No. 2 on the 5th. Leaving Annapolis the next day in a heavy sea, the boats worked over first to one shore and then to the other. Presently the machinery of No. 2 was disabled, and she put into Great Wicomico Bay for repairs. Howarth's anxiety to reach Fort Monroe led him to press on, leaving his consort to follow as soon as possible. On the 8th, however, when the repairs had been completed, and just as Stockholm was

His report on his return showed that we were under constant espionage. Acting on this information the same officer (Mr. Long), with ten men, ambuscaded and captured a Federal man-of-war boat, and for the time being put a stop to the spy system.

When I had been about a month at Plymouth the troops were relieved by a new set. On the day of their arrival I heard of a steam-launch having been seen in the river, and I informed the officer in command of the fact, and at the same time told him that the safety of the place depended on the *Albemarle*, and the safety of the *Albemarle* depended on the watchfulness of his pickets.

The crew of the *Albemarle* numbered but sixty, too small a force to allow me to keep an armed watch on deck at night and to do outside picketing besides. Moreover, to break the monotony of the life and keep

about to get away, he was attacked by guerrillas. In trying to get out into the open water the boat unfortunately grounded; and Stockholm, after using up his ammunition, set her on fire and surrendered. The prisoners were sent to Richmond, but were soon after paroled, and Stockholm on his return was dismissed. No. 1 arrived safely at her destination, and was used by Cushing in the expedition against the *Albemarle*. The list of officers and men on board Picket-boat No. 1, on the expedition of October 27, 1864, with the vessels to which they were officially attached, was as follows: Lieutenant William B. Cushing, commanding, *Monticello*; Acting Assistant Paymaster Francis H. Swan, *Olsego*; Acting Ensign William L. Howarth, *Monticello*; Acting Master's Mate John Woodman, *Commodore Hull*; Acting Master's Mate Thomas S. Gay, *Olsego*; Acting Third Assistant Engineer William Stotesbury, Picket-boat; Acting Third Assistant Engineer Charles L. Steever, *Olsego*; Samuel Higgins, first-class fireman, Picket-boat; Richard Hamilton, coal-heaver, *Shamrock*; William Smith, ordinary seaman, *Chicopee*; Bernard Harley, ordinary seaman, *Chicopee*; Edward J. Houghton, ordinary seaman, *Chicopee*; Lorenzo Deming, landsman, Picket-boat; Henry Wilkes, landsman, Picket-boat; Robert H. King, landsman, Picket-boat. Cushing and Howarth, together with those designated as attached to the "Picket-boat," were the original seven who brought the boat down from New York. Cushing and Houghton escaped, Woodman and Higgins were drowned, and the remaining eleven were captured.

down ague, I had always out an expedition of ten men, who were uniformly successful in doing a fair amount of damage to the enemy. All were anxious to be on these expeditions and to keep out of the hospital.

The officer in command of the troops was inclined to give me all assistance, and sent a picket of twenty-five men under a lieutenant; they were furnished with rockets and had a field-piece. This picket was stationed on board of a schooner about gun-shot below the *Albemarle*, where an attempt was being made to raise a vessel (the *Southfield*) sunk at the time of Commander Cooke's dash down the river. Yet on the night of the 27th of October Cushing's steam-launch ran quietly alongside of the schooner unobserved by the picket, without a sound or signal, and then steamed up to the *Albemarle*.

It was about 3 A. M. The night was dark and slightly rainy, and the launch was close to us when we hailed and the alarm was given — so close that the gun could not be depressed enough to reach her; so the crew were sent in the shield with muskets, and kept up a heavy fire on the launch as she slowly forced her way over the chain of logs and ranged by us within a few feet. As she reached the bow of the *Albemarle* I heard a report as of an unshotted gun, and a piece of wood fell at my feet. Calling the carpenter, I told him a torpedo had been exploded, and ordered him to examine and report to me, saying nothing to any one else. He soon reported "a hole in her bottom big enough to drive a wagon in."

By this time I heard voices from the launch — "We surrender," etc., etc., etc. I stopped our fire and sent out Mr. Long, who brought back all those who had been in the launch except the gallant cap-

tain and three of her crew, all of whom took to the water.

Having seen to their safety, I turned my attention to the *Albemarle* and found her resting on the bottom in eight feet of water, her upper works above water. The very men who had destroyed her had no idea of their success, for I heard one say to another, "We did our best, but there the d——d old thing is yet."

That is the way the *Albemarle* was destroyed, and a more gallant thing was not done during the war. After her destruction, failing to convince the officer in command of the troops that he could not hold the place, I did my best to help defend it. Half of my crew went down and obstructed the river by sinking the schooner at the wreck, and with the other half I had two 8-inch guns commanding the upper river put in serviceable order, relaid platforms, fished out tackles from the *Albemarle*, got a few shells, etc., and waited. I did not have to wait long. The fleet steamed up to the obstructions, fired a few shells over the town, steamed down again, and early next morning rounding the island were in the river and opened fire.

The two 8-inch guns worked by Mr. Long and Mr. Shelley did their duty, and I think did all that was done in the defense of Plymouth. The fire of the fleet was concentrated on us, and one at least of the steamers was so near that I could hear the orders given to elevate or depress the guns. When I felt that by hanging on I could only sacrifice my men and achieve nothing, I ordered our guns spiked and the men sent round to the road by a ravine.

The crew left me by Captain Maffitt were good and true men, and stuck by me to the last. If any failed in his duty, I never heard of it; and if any of them still live, I send them a hearty "God bless you!"

A NOTE OF PEACE.

REUNIONS OF "THE BLUE AND THE GRAY."



ALTHOUGH the horrors of war are the more conspicuous where the conflict is between brothers and the struggle is a long and desperate one, the evidences are numerous that, underneath the passion and bitterness of our civil war, there were counter currents of kindly feeling, a spirit of genuine friendliness pervading the opposing camps. This friendliness was something deeper than the expression of mere human instinct; the combatants felt that they were indeed brothers. Acts of kindness to wounded enemies began to be noted at Bull Run, while in every campaign useless picket firing was almost uniformly discountenanced, and the men shook hands at the outposts and talked confidently of their private affairs and their trials and hardships in the army. This feeling, confined, perhaps, to men on the very front line, culminated at Appomattox, where the victors shared rations with their late antagonists and

generously offered them help in repairing the wastes of battle. When the Union veteran returned to the North he did not disguise his faith in the good intentions of the Southern fighting man, and for a number of years after peace was made, the process of fraternization went quietly forward. The business relations of the sections and the interchange of settlers brought into close communication the rank and file of both armies, and the spirit of goodwill that had been manifested in a manner so unique at the front was found to be a hearty and general sentiment.

Out of this state of things was developed, naturally, a series of formal meetings of veterans of the Blue and the Gray. The earliest reunions of which I find record were held in 1881 (the year of the Yorktown Centennial and of Garfield's death). The first was a meeting of Captain Colwell Post, Grand Army of the Republic, of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and the ex-Confederates of Luray Valley, Virginia. The Southern veterans appointed special committees to welcome the comrades of the Carlisle