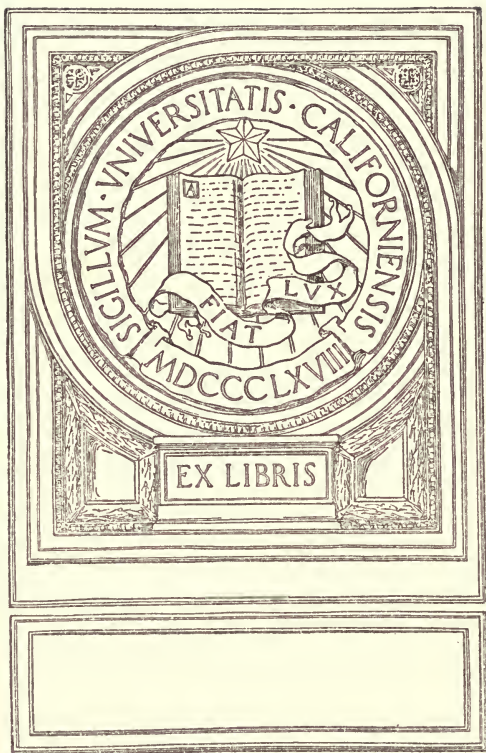


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THE  
LIFE AND SERVICES  
OF  
COMMODORE JOSIAH TATNALL;

BY  
CHARLES C. JONES, JR.

---

*MINE HONOUR IS MY LIFE; BOTH GROW IN ONE.*  
Shak. : Rich. II.

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City of  
Savannah

SAVANNAH :  
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## PREFATORY NOTE.

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The following memoir has been written in compliance with a request preferred by the nearest relatives of the deceased. In its preparation I have been greatly assisted by John R. F. Tattall, Esq.,—the Commodore's only surviving son,—who cherishes the memory of his noble father with a filial reverence and devotion rarely equaled and never excelled.

In grouping the services, and presenting an estimate of the life and character of this accomplished gentleman, thorough officer, and chivalrous seaman, I have endeavored, whenever practicable, to repeat his own utterances, and to convey an impression of his acts and conduct in the language of those who were eye-witnesses of the events which called for their expression. Thus will the reader be possessed of the first and best sources of information, and in them find warrant for deductions the surest, and apprehension the most reliable.

Rich is the legacy bequeathed by men of pure patriotism, unsullied honor, and exalted action. Dear to all is a life devoted to the service of country, to the cultivation and exhibition of the heroic virtues, and to the pursuit of duty under circumstances the most trying. Precious is the memory of him of whom we speak. No braver or more loyal son was ever cradled on the breast of this commonwealth. None more honorable or capable has she ever committed to the general keeping. During an active service of more than fifty years, never did he omit an opportunity to advance his professional reputation, fail in the exhibition of supreme devotion to the best interests of Flag and Country, falter in the display of the most conspicuous gallantry, or lose sight of his well-avowed allegiance to all that was knightly and of highest repute.

In his old age, bearing the scars of battle, and bowed by the weight of nearly four-score years, in the home of his childhood he laid him down to rest.

He sleeps in the kindly embrace of the mother earth whose soft bosom his infant feet first pressed; and those grand live-oaks at Bonaventure which sheltered him in youth, attired in sober green and with pendant moss swaying solemnly in the evening air, bend as aged, heartfelt mourners over his hallowed grave.

CHARLES C. JONES, JR.

AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, May 1st, 1878.

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THE LIFE AND SERVICES  
OF  
COMMODORE JOSIAH TATTNALL.

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CHAPTER FIRST.

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Ancestry. Birth. School Days in England.

The paternal ancestors of Commodore Josiah Tattnall removed from Normandy, in France, and settled in Cheshire, England. Marriage alliances there formed, indicate the prominent social standing of the immigrants, from 1530, among the gentry of that shire. The family name was originally *de Taten*, then *Tatenhall*, and subsequently *Tattnall*.

The first of the name who came to America located in South Carolina early in the year 1700. He there married a grand-daughter of Barnewall, Baron Trimlestown, of the Irish peerage. Josiah,—a son of this marriage,—was united in matrimony, in South Carolina, to the daughter and only child of Colonel John Mulryne, who purchased the Bonaventure estate,—a few miles below Savannah,—and settled it in 1762. Thither did Josiah Tattnall shortly afterwards remove with his family, and there he fixed his home. Of this marriage two sons, John and Josiah, were the fruit.

Upon the revolt of the American Colonies, these lads accompanied their father, and grand-father,—Colonel Mulryne,—to England. While maintaining their allegiance to the English Crown, these gentlemen declined commissions

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in the Royal army. Although firm in their support of the Home Government, they were unwilling to take active part in the coercion of the Colonies where dwelt many of their friends and connections. Upon the subversion of the Royal Government in Georgia they set out for England, where they resided during the continuance of hostilities. In consequence of this step, the family estates in Georgia were confiscated by the Rebels. Because these gentlemen declined to bear arms *in defense* of the infant State of Georgia against English rule, their property was condemned by public act,\* and they themselves were declared banished from the State forever. By a remarkable revolution in the political wheel, some eighty-four years afterwards, the personal property of Commodore Tattnall,—the subject of this sketch and the grand son of the Josiah Tattnall of whom we are now speaking,—was confiscated by the Federal Government because he refused to remain in the service of the United States and take up arms *against* the State of Georgia. It is a curious fact that included in the property thus confiscated by the Federal authorities were some articles which had been condemned and appropriated by Georgia in 1782 as the property of the Commodore's grandfather, but which, upon open sale, had been purchased by friends and restored to the family shortly after the conclusion of the revolutionary war.

Prior to the termination of the struggle of the United Colonies for independence, the younger of the two sons of Josiah Tattnall, of Bonaventure,—Josiah Tattnall, Jr.,—requested permission of his father to return to Georgia and espouse the cause of the Revolutionists. This application was refused; but the youth,—then about eighteen years

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\* Marbury & Crawford's Digest, p. 82, et seq.

old,—who had been born at Bonaventure, and was ardently attached to Georgia and her fortunes,—who, upon the eve of the departure of the immediate members of the family for England, had protested against accompanying them and, in the effort to remain, had gone so far as to throw himself from the ship as she was weighing anchor for her voyage and attempt by swimming to regain the shore,—in defiance of parental wishes and in the face of many difficulties succeeded in making his way back to Georgia. Joining the army of General Greene, he followed the fortunes of that great and good officer until the close of the war.

In appreciation of the devotion and services of this member of the family, after the recognition by England of the independence of her Colonies, Georgia restored a portion of the confiscated estates of the Tattnalls,—including Bonaventure,—to Josiah Tattnall, Jr. He was honored by his State and beloved by her citizens. Many offices of public confidence did he acceptably fill. He is now remembered as the third Captain of the Chatham Artillery, as Colonel of the First Georgia Regiment, as Brigadier General of the First Brigade of the First Division of the State forces, as a member of the Georgia Legislature, as a member of Congress, and a United States Senator from Georgia, and, finally, as Governor of the State. His name, talents and reputation are dear to the people of this commonwealth. Dying in the West Indies in 1804, at the early age of thirty-six, his last request was that his body should be carried to Georgia that it might rest in the bosom of the land he loved so well and in the companionship of the peoples who had honored him so often and so highly. This wish was observed; and he now sleeps beneath the solemn shades of those venerable live-oaks which, in commingled grandeur

and beauty, guard the cemetery at Bonaventure, long the family seat of the Tattnalls.

Of a father thus distinguished was Josiah,—the hero of this biography,—born at Bonaventure on the 9th of November, 1795. His mother was the daughter of Edward Fenwick, Esq., of South Carolina;—a descendant of the Stanton branch of the Fenwick family of Northumberland. Sir John Fenwick, Baronet, of the Wallington and senior branch, in consideration of his rank, and alliance with the house of Howard, was complimented with the axe on Tower Hill in the reign of William III. He died professing his loyalty to King James, and praying Heaven for his speedy restoration.\*

The Fenwick family is one of great antiquity and influence. It points to a famous membership even in Saxon times, and prior to the Norman Conquest of England.†

Pure blood and an honorable ancestry constitute a rich legacy for the coming generation, inspiring it with just pride in the past, and encouraging in the future a generous emulation. Such inheritance did Commodore Tattnall possess. Of it did his character and acts give token most constant and ample.

Upon the demise of Governor Tattnall his son Josiah was left entirely an orphan; his mother having died a few months previous. With his elder brother, Edward Fenwick, and a<sup>r</sup> sister, he was sent to England to be educated under the supervision of his grand-father. The boys were put to school near London. Josiah was then in the tenth year of his age, and here did he remain for the following six years.

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\*See Hume's History of England, vol. ix, p. 299. London, 1825.

†See Appendix A.



Of the conduct of the lad while pursuing his preliminary studies we have little knowledge save that it was exemplary and manly. Of the advantages then offered he appears to have conscientiously availed himself.

During his residence in England he cherished fond recollections of his American friends, a sincere attachment to the memories and attractions of the family home at Bonaventure, and an abiding loyalty to the governments of Georgia and the United States. The spirit of the father lived in the bosom of the son. On one occasion when the King's health was proposed at the table of his grand-father, young Tattnall refused to touch his glass until allowed to couple with it the health of the President of the United States. While passing through the Royal Stables and viewing the magnificent horses and equipages of the King, he turned to his companion and remarked that it would afford him far greater pleasure to look upon the President's coach and four. This love for America was evidently inherited, for he was too young to have imbibed any prejudices against the Mother Country and her institutions; and, while in England, he was the recipient of the greatest kindnesses from his grand-father and friends. Among those who manifested special interest in Josiah were his <sup>consists</sup> great-uncle, Colonel Boone of the Guards, and his sister. They were the children of his grand-father's sister who, as the widow of Samuel Perronneau, of South Carolina, some time prior to the American Revolution, had, in England, married Mr. Boone, an ex-Royal Governor of the province of South Carolina.

Of his school days in England Commodore Tattnall often spoke with tenderness and affection. They gave to him pleasant memories which he carried with him to the grave.

## CHAPTER SECOND.

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Returns to Georgia. Resides at Savannah and commences the study of Medicine. Receives a Midshipman's Warrant in the United States Navy and reports at Washington. Ordered to the *Constellation*. Tribute to Commodore Hull. Accident in the Potomac. The *Constellation* covers the batteries being erected on Craney island. First engagement with the enemy. Assists in the capture of the *Centipede*. Ordered to Lake Erie. Resigns from the navy, and goes to Washington. Restored to the navy. Participates in the battle of Bladensburg-

From notes left by the Commodore we extract the following :

"I took leave of my noble old grand-father and many kind English friends about the first of November, 1811, and sailed for Charleston, South Carolina, in the American ship *Isabella*. She was a live-oak built vessel constructed on Cumberland island, Georgia. For her day she was a very fine vessel and sailed very fast. We were detained by head winds in Cowes Roads for three weeks, during which time several hundred sail of men-of-war and merchant vessels had anchored there bound to all parts of the world, and chiefly to the Spanish Peninsula,—the war in Spain being then at its height.

"When this great fleet got under way, the *Isabella* out-sailed every ship except the men-of-war. This fact shows the great superiority of the American merchant marine of that day, in sailing qualities, over all others. This superiority it still maintains, although the English, at the present day, in their vessels built for distant voyages, have copied the American model very closely.

“While the *Isabella* was detained in Cowes Roads I resided on shore and visited various places of historical note in the vicinity, thus indulging a natural taste which has increased with years. When the wind became fair for sailing, it was a beautiful sight to see the great assemblage of vessels in the Roads get under way at a signal from the men of war and press through the narrow passage of the Needles between the Isle of Wight and the main land, crowding and becalming each other.

“The *Isabella* arrived off the bar of Charleston, but her destination was there changed, and she proceeded to Savannah. On arriving in the river, the ship, owing to her great draft, anchored below, and I took passage in a pilot boat to the city, where I arrived on Christmas morning before daylight, and roamed about the city for several hours ere I succeeded in finding a boarding house. After breakfast I sought my relative, Doctor George Jones, by whom, and his family, I was most affectionately welcomed. A fortnight having been passed in idleness and amusement among my friends, I took up my residence with Doctor Lemuel Kollock, who had, just before I left home for England, married my first cousin, Maria Campbell. It was my purpose to study medicine, in despite of a great aversion on my part, as I had promised my relations to make the effort. My kind friend Doctor Kollock, observing my repugnance to the study, recommended me to commence with anatomy, to interest me, and win me to the profession; but the attempt failed—experience at the dissection table and in the duties of a resurrectionist proving entirely too strong for my taste. The dissections disgusted me beyond endurance, and the digging up by the students of such negro subjects as were required shocked me.

This invasion of the negro grave-yards was necessary in days when no other subjects could be obtained ; and no one dared, in the face of public sentiment, to assume the role of a professed resurrectionist. Although not of a superstitious nature, I was highly imaginative ; my earliest years having been passed in the shade of the solemn old oaks of Bonaventure, and my memory there stored with the wild ghost stories of my old negro nurse and her fellow servants. Consequently, the post of picket on the occasion of grave-yard invasions was not relished by me, and my boyish animal spirits were fast giving way to melancholy. I dreaded the approach of night, for it was long before I ceased to renew in my dreams the horrid scenes of the dissecting room. It may be supposed that under such circumstances my brother students, if they found me of no assistance in other respects, appreciated my value as a vigilant sentinel. I certainly kept as bright a lookout for 'wharlocks' as did poor Tam O'Shanter on his way home on his good mare 'Meggie.' At this period in the prosecution of my medical studies, I made two mistakes which might have proved fatal in their results, by sending out wrong prescriptions to two patients. The Doctor learning these facts told me that he thought I had better obey my own professional inclination which prompted me to follow a naval career. In this I entirely agreed with him, and, application having been made to the Navy Department for a warrant for me, I received the coveted naval grade of Midshipman on the first of April, 1812,\* only three months after my arrival in Savannah from England. In those short months, it will thus

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\*The date of his appointment as Midshipman is January 1, 1812, but the warrant does not appear to have been received until three months subsequently.

be seen, I had not only become a Midshipman, but I had also been a student of anatomy, and a resurrectionist. Early in June I received my first orders to report at Washington, District of Columbia. I left Savannah for Charleston, where I passed a day with my mother's sister,—Mrs. Christopher Gadsden,—whose only son, Christopher, commanded the U. S. brig *Vixen*, then in Charleston harbor.

“I did not meet my cousin,—Captain Gadsden,—at his mother's, or my early naval career might have taken a different direction, and the misfortune avoided of being blockaded in port the whole of the impending war. I sailed the day after my arrival at Charleston in a merchant brig, loaded with timber, for the Navy Yard at Washington. The brig, on the day she sailed, having been becalmed in the bay, afforded my cousin,—Captain Gadsden,—an opportunity to visit me from his vessel, and he urged me, strenuously, to let him take me and my baggage on board the *Vixen*, saying that he would arrange with the Secretary of the Navy for a change in my orders, and thus attach me to the *Vixen*. I declined, giving as one of my reasons that I had heard that it was not advisable to sail with a relation. Had I met my cousin at his mother's residence, or had time been allowed for further parley, I think I would have been induced to conform to his wishes, but the breeze sprang up and cut short our interview. I was now at sea for the first time under orders, in a brig deeply loaded with timber, including a heavy deck load. After leaving Charleston we had a steady breeze from the southward, and all things looked prosperously until midnight, of the same day, when being in the neighborhood of the Fryling Pan shoals, the Captain, whose watch it was, went on the fore-yard to look

out. It had been blowing fresh from the southwest all day, with a considerable sea, and the vessel's canvas had been reduced to the topsails and foresail. The wind was about two points on the off shore quarter. Suddenly there was a cry of 'breakers ahead!' 'Hard down the helm,' cried the Captain. Down it went, but, in an instant, we were in the midst of heavy breakers. The brig, having great headway, came rapidly up to the wind, her yards being nearly squared, until her sails getting nearly aback, she lost her headway and took on board a tremendous breaker which filled her to the rail, filled the cabin, and put out the binnacle lights. If the Captain gave any further orders from aloft they were not heard for the roar of the breakers. The man at the helm saved us. 'Brace up the yards,' he cried, 'or we are lost!' The men jumped to the braces and swung the yards forward. The sails filled, and the brig, gathering a little headway, drifted side-way through the breakers, which proved to be the outer edge of the shoal. I was on deck at the time and aided, with my little strength and less skill, the helmsman. We struck slightly once. I have been in the navy upwards of fifty years and was never in greater danger of a watery grave than on this occasion. We reached Chesapeake bay a day or two afterwards, and learned from a pilot boat that war had been declared against England on the 18th June. My anxiety, under the circumstances, to reach Washington induced me to hire the pilot boat to convey me there. On going up the Potomac we passed the U. S. frigate *Constellation* lying off St. Mary's. It was my first sight of an American frigate, and I gazed with enthusiastic feelings,—increased by the fact that we were now at war,—on the vessel's dark, long hull. As we slowly passed her, her bell

struck the hour. Its tones vibrated to my very heart, and the tone of that bell sounds, at times, on my ear to this day—my seventy-first year. We reached Washington, where I, in company with several other youngsters, was placed at my books, under the charge of a naval officer appointed to instruct the newly appointed Midshipmen in their duties. Having already acquired a good knowledge of simple mathematics, I soon passed through the allotted ordeal, and was ordered, August 1st, 1812, to the frigate *Constellation*, then fitting for sea at the Washington Navy Yard, and commanded by Commodore Bainbridge, with Lieutenant Thomas McDonough as first Lieutenant. Both these officers subsequently became greatly distinguished. The *Constellation* was at this time the favorite ship of the navy. She had fought two actions, during the French disturbance, with French frigates, capturing both of her antagonists, one of which, however, subsequently escaped, upon the *Constellation* losing one of her masts—wounded in the action. The *Constellation* was very fast, and was called by the French ‘The Yankee Racehorse.’ She was very crank, and had an awkward way, without much provocation, of getting on her beam ends. On one occasion she was knocked down while chasing a French privateer, but succeeded, notwithstanding, in overtaking and capturing the chase. On another occasion, while at anchor in the Delaware, with her air ports open, she was struck by a squall and tumbled over and filled. The *Constellation* was not ready and provided with a crew until late in the fall. In the meantime we had heard of the capture of the English frigate *Guerriere* by the frigate *Constitution*, and of the English sloop-of-war *Frolic* by the *Wasp*, of the same force and rate. These victories caused the greatest exul-

tation throughout the country and a confidence in the officers and men of the navy which led to new victories. This exultation on the part of the people was enhanced by the constant reverses experienced by the army, which, however brave, could not, in its undisciplined state, contend successfully against a foe equally brave and perfectly disciplined, led by officers formed in the school of active European service and seasoned by battle. The officers of the navy had, before the war commenced, a proper confidence in themselves professionally, and were animated by a desire to wipe out the insult the service had sustained in the attack of the English frigate *Leopard* on the unresisting frigate *Chesapeake*. The first victory of the war gained by the *Constitution*, under Hull, confirmed this confidence, and that old hero I consider to have been entitled by this victory to half the glory gained by the navy in this war. What an oversight it is that this gallant pioneer of American naval renown should have passed away without a memorial having, by his comrades, been raised to commemorate his services! The confident manner in which he took his ship into action, and the skill of his manœuvring, at once both lowered the confidence of the English and exalted our own. I knew the noble old Commodore well. Simple in his manners, and as modest as he was brave, he passed through life with but little parade; and at his death his memory was so far neglected that the usual compliment of firing minute guns at the various naval stations was omitted.

“When the *Constellation* was ready for sea it was found necessary to detach a number of the Midshipmen attached to her; not less than thirty being on board. The selection of such as were to remain was left to the Captain, Charles



Stewart, who had succeeded Commodore Bainbridge in command of the frigate. To my chagrin I was one of those detached, the Captain evidently selecting those to remain from among the Midshipmen of more experience and advanced age than myself. The Captain, in parting with us, addressed us kindly and said that he had arranged that we should be ordered to the *Adams*, a ship of twenty-six guns then fitting for sea at Washington. Deeply mortified at this circumstance I called on the Secretary of the Navy and asked for orders to the Lakes, telling him that, as I was one of the first Midshipmen attached to the *Constellation*, I thought I ought to have been retained, and that if I received orders to the *Adams* the same treatment, when she was ready for sea, might be awarded me. The kind gentleman, then Secretary of the Navy, the Honorable Paul Hamilton, of South Carolina, replied that the Lakes were no place for me, and that he would re-order me to the *Constellation*, and let Captain Stewart know that he had a special desire that I should serve in her. A day or two after, with my new order, I called on Captain Stewart, at his lodgings on shore, and reported myself. He seemed displeased, and, as I thought, treated me cavalierly. He did not invite me to be seated; and, having perused my order, he returned it to me without directing me to report on board the frigate. I left him, and instead of going on board returned to my lodgings, with the determination of not joining the ship until the Captain chose to order me. A few days later the first Lieutenant sent to enquire why I had not reported on board? I stated my reason and, at once, received the order from the Captain to do so. I expected from this unusual position towards my Captain that I should find him not well disposed towards

me; but, on the contrary, he showed, on all occasions, a kind regard for and favorable appreciation of me. When the *Constellation* was ready for sea she left the Navy Yard and dropped down the river to Alexandria, where I met with an accident which might have ignominiously closed my naval career. I had been sent, in command of a boat, to the Navy Yard to obtain some necessary stores, and was directed by the senior officer to inform Captain Stewart, on my return to the *Constellation*, of the recently received news of the capture of the English frigate *Macedonian* by the *United States*, (American frigate). On my reaching the *Constellation* and reporting the news of the latest victory, it produced a natural exultation, and was celebrated, in the manner of the day, by an extra allowance of grog to the crew, and by an invitation to the steerage, by the ward-room officers, to join them in a 'Hip, hip, hurrah!' In the midst of the enjoyment, I was sent for to take charge of a boat to bring some one from the wharf to the ship. It was blowing very fresh, and was intensely cold. Whether I had 'hipped, hipped,' too hard or not, I can't say, but, in stepping on the gangway ladder to descend into the boat, I missed my footing and pitched head foremost over the side. Fortunately for me the boat was kept off from the side of the ship to prevent her being stove by the roughness of the water; and instead of falling into the cutter and breaking my neck, I plunged into the water. I preserved sufficient presence of mind not to attempt to swim; but, allowing myself to rise to the surface without any further effort than to throw myself on my back and float,—fearing that any other course might bring me, with the strong tide running, either under the ship or the boat,—I was fortunately enabled to keep above water so near the boat as to

enable the crew to pull me in. Mortified by my involuntary display of gymnastics, I pushed off for the shore, which was a considerable distance, and, before I could discharge the duty assigned me, suffered intensely from the cold which had frozen my clothes into sheets of ice. The *Constellation* now dropped down the Potomac to Saint Mary's, where the crew were assiduously exercised at the guns and at firing at a target;—a necessary delay, for the number of English vessels on the ocean made it hazardous to rely on time for drill being afforded at sea before falling in with an antagonist. The powder of the *Constellation* appeared to be defective and the ship was ordered to stop at Annapolis, and from thence to proceed to Norfolk. In executing this order the ship anchored in Hampton Roads.”

Here the notes abruptly end. It is a matter of sincere regret that Commodore Tattnall did not complete the autobiographical sketch thus happily begun. Advanced age, physical infirmities, and an unavoidable depression, caused by terrible reverses, rendered any protracted labor with his pen peculiarly burdensome.

While the *Constellation* was lying abreast of Craney island covering the fortifications then in process of erection at that place,—the enemy being in force in Hampton Roads,—the utmost caution was requisite for her protection.

As the manner in which the frigate was prepared for defense, on this occasion, was highly appreciated for its skillful and seaman-like dispositions, it is thought worthy of being particularly mentioned. So writes Mr. Cooper in his *History of the Navy of the United States*.\* He continues: “The *Constellation* was anchored in the middle of the channel, which is quite narrow, and on each side of

\* Vol. II, p. 278. London, 1839.

her were moored seven gun-boats, on board of which were placed officers and men belonging to the ship. A circle of booms, securely fastened, protected the gun-boats from being boarded, which would enable them to maintain a flanking fire on all assailants of the frigate. The gun-decks of the latter were housed, and the ports were shut in. Great care was taken that no rope should be permitted to be hanging over the side of the vessel, the stern ladders were taken away, and even the gang-way cleets were removed. Boarding nettings were made of twenty-one thread ratlin-stuff, that had been boiled in half-made pitch, which rendered it so hard as almost to defy the knife. To give greater security, nail rods and small chains were secured to the netting, in lines about three feet apart. Instead of tricing to the rigging, this netting was spread out-board, towards the yard-arms, rising about twenty-five feet above the deck. To the outer rope, or ridge-line of the netting, were secured pieces of kentledge, with the idea that by cutting the tricing lines when the enemy should get alongside, his boats and men might be caught beneath by the fall of the weights. Pieces of kentledge were also suspended forward, from the sprit-sail-yard, bow-sprit, etc., etc., to prevent boats from lying beneath, while the netting was here hoisted to the fore-stay. The carronades were charged to the muzzle with musket balls, and depressed to the nearest range, in order to sweep the water around the ship."

On three occasions did the English fleet plan and attempt a night attack upon the *Constellation* while in this exposed situation. Through the vigilance of advanced scout boats, however, were those intentions discovered; and the enemy perceiving that his approach was known, retired.

So soon as the fortifications were sufficiently advanced,

and block ships prepared for sinking in the channel, the *Constellation* was returned to a place of safety. In this way did Midshipman Tattnall encounter his earliest naval service in the presence of the enemy.

On the 20th of June, 1813, the British ships weighed anchor and, with the tide, ascended to the mouth of James' river where, in the afternoon, they were observed making preparations to send up a large force in boats. As much depended upon the proper defense of the batteries on Craney island, Captain Cassin, who commanded the naval force at Norfolk, ordered Lieutenants Neale, Shubrick, and Sanders, of the *Constellation*, with one hundred seamen, to go on shore and take charge of the principal guns. This party was sustained by Lieutenant Breckinridge of the marines, and about fifty men of that corps. Most of the officers of the navy then at Norfolk, and who did not belong to the frigate, were also employed in the gun-boats or about the island. Early on the morning of the 22nd the enemy was discovered landing a large force round the point of the Nansemond; and, about 8 A. M., the barges of the English vessels of war attempted to land in front of Craney island at a point where they were safe from the fire of the gun-boats, although exposed to that of the Seamen's battery. With great precision and coolness did Lieutenant Neale turn his guns upon them. So effective was his fire that, after suffering the loss of three of his boats, the enemy was forced to retire baffled of his object.\* Midshipman Tattnall was then acting with, and under the orders of Lieutenant Neale, and shared in the credit won by the officers, seamen, and marines on this occasion for their steadiness, discipline, and spirit. He was one of a

\* Cooper's History of the Navy of the United States, vol. II, pp. 315, 316. London, 1839.

party of officers and seamen who, during the progress of the affair, waded out and took possession of the barges which grounded. One of the barges sunk was the *Centipede*, so called from the great number of oars she rowed. She was about fifty feet long and carried seventy-five men. Captain Hanchett, of H. M. ship *Diadem*, commanding and leading the naval attack, narrowly escaped capture by leaping overboard from the *Centipede* when she was disabled, and swimming to one of the other boats.

In this, his first engagement, young Tattall gave manifest token of that courage, indifference to danger, and brilliant action, which so signally characterized him during his long and honorable career.

In April, 1814, he was ordered by Captain Gordon, of the *Constellation*, to report to Lieutenant Kennedy, of Norfolk, to assist in conveying sixty men from that place to Lake Erie. Arrived at Lake Erie, his further orders were to report for duty to Captain Sinclair, of the Navy. Upon presenting himself, he was entrusted by Lieutenant Kennedy with the sole conduct of the men. This special service was satisfactorily performed and he would probably have remained with the Lake Erie squadron until the end of the war, but for official treatment by his commanding officer which he deemed unjust, undignified, and the result of personal animosity. It occurred on this wise: Midshipman Tattall, then a youth of eighteen years, was detailed to discover and arrest deserters. One of the men resisted arrest and was thereupon chastised by Tattall, who succeeded in conquering and bringing him in. The deserter had the effrontery to report the chastisement he had received, and to lodge a complaint against the Midshipman. In considering the matter his commanding offi-

cer took occasion to criticise severely the conduct of, and to find fault with, Midshipman Tattnall. Stung to the quick by the injustice of the procedure, and unable to demand the satisfaction which he desired from an officer much his superior in rank, he at once tendered his resignation and was permitted to leave the station.

Proceeding to Washington he laid the facts of the case before ex-Governor George M. Troup, who was then a Senator from Georgia. By him was he persuaded to reconsider his determination to quit the service. After some difficulty, Mr. Troup succeeded in securing his restoration to the navy. While awaiting the action of the Secretary of the Navy, the city of Washington was captured by the English forces under Major General Ross and Rear Admiral Cockburn. Attaching himself, as a volunteer, to a company composed of the employés in the Navy Yard, Mr. Tattnall participated in the battle of Bladensburg. On the retreat from that disastrous field, Mr. Calvert,—a prominent gentleman of the neighborhood,—found him, quite exhausted by rapid marches and the fatigues of the day, bathing his inflamed feet at a spring. Compassionating his youth and suffering condition, he invited him to his house. Too proud to present himself *as a fugitive*, Tattnall politely, yet persistently, declined the generous invitation, and, so soon as his present fatigue and pains were somewhat alleviated, pursued his way, he scarcely knew whither, as the English forces were already well advanced in their mission of devastation and ruin. We here recognize an early indication of that lofty, self-reliant spirit which attained such wonderful development in maturer years.

### CHAPTER THIRD.

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Ordered to the brig *Epervier*. With Commodore Decatur in the Mediterranean. Exchanges into the *Constellation*. Narrow escape. Transferred to the *Ontario*. Enjoys his cruise in the Mediterranean. Examples of his generosity. Advanced to the grade of Lieutenant and ordered to the *Macedonian*. Cruise in the Pacific. Duel with an officer in Lord Cochrane's fleet. Acts as second to Midshipman Pinckney. Tattnall's conduct in the affair. Challenge to English naval officers. His courage, and nice sense of honor, both personal and national. Returns to the United States.

On the 10th day of October, 1814, Midshipman Tattnall was ordered to the brig *Epervier*, then at Savannah, Georgia. This vessel was a prize which had been captured a short time previously by the United States corvette *Peacock*. In her Tattnall remained until the termination of the war; seeing no sea service during that period.

Shortly after the ratification of a treaty of peace with England, the Dey of Algiers, in violation of the treaty of 1795, had committed violent outrages upon American commerce within his waters. For the chastisement of this piratical power a fleet was rapidly concentrated by the United States in the Mediterranean. Of this squadron the *Epervier* formed one of the vessels, and in her Tattnall proceeded to the scene of active operations. He was present in one or two affairs of secondary moment, but the achievements of the gallant Decatur soon brought the Dey to terms and secured for the United States indemnity for the past and substantial pledges for the future. Peace being concluded while the naval force was concentrated off Algiers, the squadron was speedily reduced and the *Epervier* ordered



home. Urged by a brother officer who was attached to the *Constellation*,—which vessel was to remain in the Mediterranean,—to exchange with him, Tattnell consented. Application in form was submitted, and approved by the commanding officer. The exchange was effected, and the evening before the *Epervier* set sail on her homeward bound voyage he reported on board the *Constellation*. After passing through the straits of Gibraltar, that vessel was never more seen or heard of. She perished in the wide ocean, and all officers and men on board were lost.

It does, indeed, appear that

“Man’s life is all a mist, and in the dark  
Our fortunes meet us.”

After serving some eighteen months in the *Constellation*, Midshipman Tattnell was, on the first of January, 1817, transferred to the corvette *Ontario*, in which he remained on the Mediterranean station until towards the close of the year, when that vessel was recalled to the waters of the United States and paid off. This term of service in the Mediterranean and its dependent seas was exceedingly attractive and profitable to our young friend, affording opportunity for companionship with the polite and the accomplished, bringing him into intimate acquaintance with classic scenes, and localities famous in history, and introducing him to the knowledge of various peoples and customs. With keenest relish and genuine appreciation did he pursue the avenues of information and improvement thus opened. The ameliorating, elevating, and catholic influences of travel are perhaps best illustrated in the case of an intelligent, observant, naval officer.

A circumstance occurred while he was attached to the

*Ontario* forcibly illustrating a trait which characterized Commodore Tattnall throughout his long life. A messmate, who was anxious to leave the service and betake himself to the pursuit of a calling for which he deemed himself better qualified, applied to him for a loan of no inconsiderable amount. Although a compliance with the request would cause no little inconvenience at this distant station, and leave him, for a time at least, without the means of enjoying the pleasures and advantages which offered their attractions on every hand, Tattnall supplied him with the money at the expense of his own comfort and enjoyment. His companion soon after left the service, returned to the United States, and died without having accomplished his purpose or acquired the means requisite for returning the sum borrowed.

On another occasion he loaned a month's pay to a brother officer, who subsequently quarreled with him. The dispute waxed warm, and so severely did Tattnall comment upon his conduct that, but for the fact that the ship was at sea, a duel would probably have ensued. The estrangement still existing, as Midshipman Tattnall was one day standing in the gangway looking over the side of the ship, a common friend approached and handed him, in behalf of the debtor, the loan. Receiving it, Tattnall remarked, "Well, tell the gentleman that debt is paid;" and, on the instant, tossed the money into the sea.

Upon his return from the Mediterranean he applied himself with great assiduity to such studies as were peculiarly requisite to enable him to stand with distinction the examination for promotion to a lieutenantcy. His advancement to this grade occurred on the first of April, 1818, and on the thirtieth of the following June he was

ordered to the frigate *Macedonian* then fitting out for a cruise in the Pacific. Just before he joined the *Macedonian* commenced an intimacy between himself and a brother officer of like age and rank which, maintained unimpaired through subsequent years, proved ever a source of mutual and abiding happiness. The friendship between Tattnall and Paulding was so generous, close, and pronounced, that it was recognized throughout the entire American naval service, and admired as a pleasing example of pure, unselfish, and almost romantic devotion between two noble men of heroic, generous impulses, great hearts, exalted manhood, cultivated intellects, and kindred tastes. For more than half a century was this intimacy sedulously preserved, and now that death has severed the personal companionship, by no one is the memory of the gallant Georgian more tenderly cherished than by his surviving comrade, Rear Admiral Paulding, of the United States Navy. Together, as young lieutenants, did they join the *Macedonian* at Boston.

That frigate sailed in September, 1818, but, encountering a severe hurricane, was dismasted near the capes of Virginia. This necessitated her being taken into Norfolk, where she was refitted. Setting out thence upon her cruise, she reached Valparaiso in the following May. Upon arrival, it was ascertained that the Chilians were equipping a fleet to coöperate in an invasion of Peru then in the possession of Spain. This fleet was commanded by Lord Cochrane, an officer who, from political and other causes, had been disgraced in England and cashiered from the British navy. While an officer of that navy, he had exhibited professional ability and bravery rarely, if ever, excelled in any service. Around him he had gathered officers from the United King-

dom. Feelings of bitterness and enmity engendered by the recent war between England and the United States were still dominant in the breasts of not a few citizens and soldiers of those nationalities. Occasions were not infrequent upon which they found open and violent expression. Despite his early English education, and the affection he cherished for his English relatives, Lieutenant Tattnell could not, with his love of country and her flag, brook the slightest reflection upon the conduct of the young Republic or her adherents during the late contest upon sea and land. The language and conduct of one of Lord Cochrane's officers proving offensive in this regard, a challenge ensued which resulted in a quick duel with pistols:—Tattnell's antagonist retiring from the field with a bullet in his shoulder.

After a long cruise, during which various points of interest on the Pacific coast were visited, the *Macedonian* returned to the squadron headquarters at Valparaiso. The temper of the officers of the Anglo-Chilian fleet towards the officers of the United States navy there present was still by no means cordial or agreeable. Desiring, as far as practicable, to avoid the chances of a personal collision with Lord Cochrane's officers, Lieutenant Tattnell seldom went on shore. He accepted, however, an invitation to form one of an evening party at a hotel in the city. Unfortunately quite a number of Lord Cochrane's officers were among the guests. Richard Pinckney, of South Carolina,—one of the older midshipmen of the *Macedonian*,—upon entering the hotel found himself in the midst of an assemblage of these Anglo-Chilian officers. An animated discussion,—during the progress of which Pinckney took occasion to denounce Lord Cochrane,—eventuated in a violent personal quarrel. Midshipman Pinckney challenged his opponent,

and a hostile meeting was immediately agreed upon. Lieutenant Tattnell coming in at this moment, was requested by Pinckney to act as one of his seconds,—it having been agreed upon that each principal should name two friends. Armed with heavy ship's pistols and swords, the principals, accompanied by their seconds, proceeded to the sea-beach of the *Almandral*. The moon was at the full and the night was cloudless. Hundreds had assembled to witness the meeting. Pinckney having given the challenge, his antagonist named the distance;—ten paces. It was arranged that the principals should wheel and fire. The requisites being all adjusted, the principals took their positions. At that critical moment one of the English officer's seconds advanced and stated that as his friend had heard that Mr. Pinckney was a dead shot he declined fighting at ten paces, but would fight at five paces. Pinckney's friends insisted that the duel should proceed upon the terms as agreed on, and in accordance with which the principals had been already posted. To this the friends of the Englishman stoutly objected; and, amid the growing confusion, there appeared no alternative save an acquiescence in the murderous proposition. At this juncture Lieutenant Tattnell walked up to the Englishman's second who had interrupted the proceeding, and said to him: "You are a coward and a scoundrel, and have made all this difficulty. Now *you shall first fight me at five paces.*" This settled the controversy. The fellow backed down, asked Tattnell's pardon, and said his friend would fight Mr. Pinckney at the distance of ten paces as named. The duel proceeded. Several shots were exchanged. The clothing of both principals was cut, and the Englishman wounded. The ammunition being exhausted, and the police threatening interference, a reconciliation was brought about.

In consequence of the prominent part which Lieutenant Tattnall sustained in these difficulties, the officers of the flag ship of the British squadron, then in port, sympathizing with their countrymen serving under Cochrane with the Chilian Government, indulged in some comments which he did not fancy. He at once sent them a message by a responsible party that if his course had in any manner displeased them he would be most happy to fight them of all grades from the "cock pit" to the "cabin door."

While at anchor in the harbor of Valparaiso a Chilian corvette, lying near the *Macedonian*, while flying her numerous flags and signals to dry them, hoisted the American flag below the English. Upon seeing this, Tattnall had a boat manned and, pulling along side of the corvette, compelled the officer in charge to run the American flag up to the masthead.

Fear was an emotion to which Commodore Tattnall, from his earliest years, was an utter stranger. Courage was a marked attribute of his character. In the discharge of duty and in the maintenance of honor, both personal and national, he was utterly insensible to danger and reckless of consequences. Observant to the last degree of the proprieties of life, and the rights of others, he tolerated no infringement of his own. His sense of honor was at all times most acute, and his conceptions of true manhood most exalted. Affable and companionable in his intercourse with his brother officers and friends, he never forgot his personal dignity or suffered intercourse to degenerate into unbecoming familiarity. Generous almost to a fault was he, and yet at all times observant of his obligations. Firm in his friendships and absolutely truthful in all his utterances, he

was in thought, word, and act a noble example of the brave, hightoned gentleman, and gallant, accomplished officer. Such were his characteristics ; and, at an early period, they won for him a respect and an esteem which increased with his years and ascending rank. We should not omit to mention also that keen appreciation of right and justice, and that utter detestation of unfairness and duplicity, which he ever exhibited.

In consequence of an official disagreement with his Captain, and impaired health, Lieutenant Tattnall obtained permission to return to the United States, and reached home a little in advance of the *Macedonian*. Upon a careful consideration of the official attitude he assumed toward his commanding officer on this occasion, he was fully exonerated by the Navy Department. The matter at issue involving no personal disagreement did not interrupt the friendly relations existing between these officers.

## CHAPTER FOURTH.

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Marries. Studies mathematics at Partridge's Military School. As first Lieutenant of the schooner *Jackal* engaged in the suppression of piracy in the West Indies. Ordered to the frigate *Constitution*. Second cruise in the Mediterranean. Returns to the United States in the frigate *Brandywine*. Assigned to the corvette *Erie*. Admiral Semmes' account of Lieutenant Tattnall's cutting out of the *Federal*. Tattnall's letter on the subject. Confronts Commodore Daniels. Surveys the Tortugas and selects a site for a fort. His services complimented by the President, and the Navy Department. Letter detailing the incidents of the survey, and the preparation of his official report.

In 1821 Lieutenant Tattnall was married to his cousin, a daughter of Ebenezer Jackson, Esq., who had served with distinction as an officer in the revolutionary army. His wife was Miss Fenwick, of South Carolina, a sister of Tattnall's mother.

Being off duty, Lieutenant Tattnall improved his freedom from active service during the year 1822, by taking up his residence near Partridge's military school and placing himself under the instruction of its professor of mathematics. His purpose was to perfect himself in a knowledge of the higher branches of a science most useful and necessary to one of his calling. A twelve month was thus spent in seclusion and severe study. Then were securely laid the foundations of a mathematical education which, subsequently enlarged, enabled him to meet with accuracy and distinction all the requirements of the naval profession. This voluntary consecration of his leisure to earnest study at a period of life when most young officers are inclined to pleasure and amusement, argues an intelligent apprehension of the scope



of his professional requirements, and a laudable ambition to excel in them. It may be truthfully affirmed that he omitted no opportunity for self-improvement. While he was pursuing his mathematical studies he also perfected himself in manly exercises and gentle accomplishments. He became one of the best swordsmen in the navy, was an expert boxer, and an admirable shot with pistol, rifle, and fowling-piece. Fond of exercise, he was a rapid and enduring pedestrian, indulging in long walks whenever practicable. He was never idle; and, when not otherwise employed, was much given to reading,—his favorite books being those appertaining to history, travel, and the classics. In the language of his bosom friend, Paulding, he was at this period of his life,—and subsequent years brought no change,—“of a chaste and pure cast of character, of high-toned and chivalric honor, gentle and generous to all humanity, with his friends joyous, guileless, and playful, and, when occasion called for an exhibition of sterner manhood, his unflinching nerve knew no fear.”

In 1822 a squadron of light and fast sailing vessels was fitted out and its command conferred upon Commodore Porter. This fleet was directed to cruise among the islands of the West Indies for the suppression of piracy, which had become very common and annoying in those waters. To the schooner *Jackal* of this force was Tattnall ordered as first Lieutenant. She sailed from Norfolk in 1823. Upon the appearance of Commodore Porter's command among the Islands, the piratical rovers speedily withdrew. The *Jackal* captured no prey and her cruise was uneventful.

The following year Lieutenant Tattnall was ordered to the frigate *Constitution*, then fitting out for the Mediterranean. In this vessel, which bore the flag of Commodore Thomas

McDonough, he sailed for that station. This service,—which was marked by nothing of special moment,—afforded most enjoyable opportunity for confirming the impressions of, and enlarging the acquaintance with the shores and classic haunts of the Mediterranean which he had so happily formed on the occasion of his first visit. During its continuance all hours of leisure were devoted to general reading and a personal inspection of localities possessing historic note. Much benefit did he derive from this cruise. His reputation as an officer grew day by day. His bearing as a cultivated, dignified gentleman was pronounced. With his associates of all grades his popularity was unquestioned. He was already one of the marked officers of the United States Navy. With Commodore McDonough his relations were of the most cordial character; and he was selected by the officers of the flag-ship to break to the Commodore the afflictive intelligence of the death of his wife.

Commodore McDonough being in delicate health, and much oppressed by this great sorrow, sailed for the United States, leaving the flag-ship *Constitution* still upon the station. After his departure Lieutenant Tattnall was ordered to the frigate *Brandywine*, in which vessel he returned home in 1826.

After the customary leave of absence, on the first of October, 1828, he received orders to report as first Lieutenant to Commander Turner, on board the corvette *Erie*, then attached to the West India squadron. While serving in her he materially added to his reputation as an active officer of conspicuous merit. As the first Lieutenant of the corvette he claimed the honor of commanding a cutting out expedition, successfully conducted, the details of which

are given by Admiral Raphael Semmes in the following "Recollections of the late Josiah Tattnall:"

"I first became acquainted with the subject of this sketch in the year 1828. I was a young Midshipman, and Tattnall a Lieutenant in the United States Navy. Only fourteen years had elapsed since we had come out of our late war with Great Britain, and much of the chivalry and daring which had been begotten by that war still remained among the officers of the navy. The navy was, at this time, a fine school for discipline and for the cultivation of all the noble and manly traits of the sailor, and we had in it some as fine specimens of the naval officer, probably, as any previous age had produced. Prominent among these was Josiah Tattnall. I remember him well, at the period of which I speak. He was the first Lieutenant of the sloop-of-war *Erie* of twenty-two guns. The *Erie* (as were all the vessels of the navy in that day) was a sailing ship, and the science and art of seamanship were the idols of the profession. Tattnall excelled in both. He handled his ship like a toy in all kinds of weather, was always at his post in times of danger, and possessed in an eminent degree the confidence of both men and officers. He was in the prime of life, being about thirty-five years of age, active, energetic, and enterprising. If there was an expedition of any kind to be fitted out, Tattnall always claimed his right to lead it. Piracy still lingered in the West Indies, and I remember to have been one of a boat expedition to scour the coasts and keys of Cuba under his command. We did not fall in with any enemy, but that was not Tattnall's fault; for he kept his boats constantly moving, and reminded me of some gallant Knight of old, always eager for the fray; and, as night would fall upon his labors after a fruit-

less search for his enemy, he would exhibit all the signs of a man who had been foiled in a darling purpose. He was at this period of his life social in his habits and disposition, warmly attaching to himself all those with whom he had intercourse. Like most men of his ardent temperament, he was at times irascible, but his high sense of honor never permitted him to remain long in the wrong when he had given offense. The *Erie*, when ready for sea, took on board General William H. Harrison, afterwards President of the United States, and proceeded with him to the United States of Colombia, to which government he had been appointed, by President Adams, Minister Plenipotentiary. On our way to our port of destination we stopped on the island of Saint Bartholomew, in the West Indies, where it so happened that Tattnall had an opportunity to gratify his love of adventure. Spain was then at war with her numerous South American dependencies, and a number of our countrymen had fitted out fast sailing vessels, and taken commissions as privateers in the service of the embryo-republics. One of these cruisers, called the *Federal*, in the service of Buenos Ayres, incautiously captured an American ship with some Spanish property on board, and, in disregard of the principle that 'free ships make free goods,' took the goods out of her as prize of war. Our Commander, Daniel Turner,—himself a fine specimen of a gallant naval officer,—on learning these facts demanded that the Governor of the Island should deliver to him the *Federal*,—then lying under the guns of the fortress,—to pay the penalty of this breach of the laws of nations. The demand was refused, and a boat expedition to cut her out was the consequence. A few hours of preparation were all that was needed. Everybody volunteered, but all could

not go. The expedition was delayed until night-fall. The night was propitious. There was no moon, and the passing of rain-clouds at intervals added to the darkness. The boats, with muffled oars, pulled steadily to the little privateer lying almost at the very muzzles of the guns of the fort. There was some difficulty in getting the anchor, and, as the head-sails were hoisted to pay the little craft off before the land breeze which was then blowing, the fort opened upon Tattnall; but just then, as good luck would have it, his anchor tripped, his craft paid off in gallant style, and in a few minutes more he was effectually shielded by the distance and the darkness combined. The fort fired several times, but no one was injured. The *Federal* was sent as prize of war to Pensacola, and I was promoted to the honors of a watch officer to assist in taking her in. The cruise of the *Erie* ended after a few months, and we were dispersed by other orders to other ships, carrying with us many cherished recollections of our late companions. Time rolled on, and I saw nothing more of Tattnall until we met during the Mexican war."

As illustrating his characteristic modesty, always observed when communicating even to those nearest and dearest to him any intelligence of events in which he had been a prominent actor, we take the liberty of introducing the following private letter :

"UNITED STATES SHIP ERIE, AT SEA,

"OFF ST. CROIX, 9th December, 1828.

"MY DEAR \*\*\*\*\* :

"I wrote you from St. Barts, a day or two since, and yesterday I wrote E\*\*\* from St. Martins. By the last you will find that we ended our negotiation with the au-

thorities of St. Barts very suddenly with a Jackson argument. Our prize is now in company with us, but will part from us to-night for Pensacola. I had at first determined to take her in myself, but the Captain wishes me to remain on board the *Erie* for reasons too flattering to me not to induce me, at once, to abandon my determination. We are now on our way to Curracoa, Maracaibo, and Pensacola. We shall, I hope, be at the last place in a month. I have nothing new to tell you. I am quite well, and so much pleased with my situation on board that I cannot be more so. My cruise has, as yet, been, and promises to continue, a delightful one. Even the little trifling affair at St. Barts has been worth 'ten years of peaceful life.' Its influence is shown throughout the whole ship, and the belief that, even in these dull times, there is a possibility of seeing some service more exciting than mere making and taking in sail, has given us something of a war animation. Captain Turner told me, in a delicate manner yesterday, that in his communication to the Department he had made known fully to it the difficulties I had to surmount in bringing out the vessel. Don't mention this out of the family, and only to those of the family who you think will not retail it. Say nothing of it when you write to Boston. I only mention it to you as I know it will give you pleasure to learn that a perfect confidence is established between Captain Turner and myself, which will insure to me a pleasant cruise.

"Remember me at both houses. Tell Sawyer I wrote him from St. Barts. Remember me to the Alsops, and believe me

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"JOSIAH TATTNALL."

In the capture of the *Federal*, Lieutenant Tattnell gave

grave offense to the reckless men,—Americans and foreigners,—who had sought and taken service under the flags of the South American States in revolution against the Crown of Spain. This umbrage was by no means diminished by the very plain and emphatic manner in which he condemned the conduct of Commodore Daniels,—in the service of one of these South American States,—in trespassing upon the rights of United States merchant vessels. This Commodore Daniels sent Lieutenant Tattnall a message from Baltimore threatening to chastise him on sight. On receipt of this communication Tattnall at once set out for that city. Arrived at Barnum's Hotel, one of the first persons he met was the veritable Commodore Daniels standing with a crowd of friends about him. No sooner did he recognize Lieutenant Tattnall, than he turned about and left. Although Tattnall remained in Baltimore for several days, making a point of it to show himself in public and at places of general resort, he heard and saw nothing more of the Commodore, *who did not chastise him on sight.*

Detached from the *Erie* on the 10th of August, 1829, he was, on the 17th of the same month, placed in charge of a survey of the Tortugas reefs, off the coast of Florida. Urged by the Southern members of Congress, and by those representing the maritime States of the North, it was resolved by the General Government to construct a fortress which would practically command the channel between Florida and Cuba, and cover an anchorage suitable either for refuge or for offensive naval operations. The location of such a work involved a careful preliminary survey and the exercise of sound military judgment. The selection of Lieutenant Tattnall for the duty was most judicious, and was a tribute to his acknowledged abilities. As the reefs and

keys were at the time uninhabited, and the vessels employed were inferior schooners and poorly supplied, the officers and men engaged in the survey suffered no little discomfort. Patiently and most thoroughly was the labor performed, and the result was entirely satisfactory to the government. Upon the completion of the survey Lieutenant Tattall repaired to Washington and submitted his report. The locality suggested for the construction of the fortress was approved, and President Jackson evinced much interest in the early commencement and vigorous prosecution of the work. Summoned to attend a Cabinet meeting that he might satisfy any inquiries which might arise, he found the President on bended knee carefully examining the large charts spread upon the floor. Both by the President and by the Secretary of the Navy was he highly complimented for his intelligent and valuable services in this behalf. The site selected having received official sanction, the fortress was built in due course, and by its presence still attests the utility of this survey and the excellent judgment of the officer under whose supervision it was conducted.

In the following letter are detailed the circumstances attendant upon the preparation and submission of the report which justified the General Government in fortifying the Dry Tortugas :

“WASHINGTON CITY, 2d March, 1830.

“DEAR \* \* \* \*:

“Have you thought me dead, or have you thought me alive and that I had forgotten you?

“For the first time since I arrived here I have a moment's leisure. You can have no idea of the miserable state of anxiety I have been in. I found, on my arrival, that the



service on which I had been engaged had, in my absence, become one of so much consequence that I have been startled at the responsibility which awaited me. It has been the theme of our Southern members, who, for many reasons, are anxious to see a fortress established on the Florida reef, and I found the President, Secretary, and Commissioners so anxious to receive the report that I confess I was apprehensive of my abilities not having equalled their expectations. I was about to give in a report which might subject me to newspaper and other criticism, and you may (as you know me well) feel how anxiously my time has been employed. The life we led at the Tortugas was so miserable that I could only make general notes on the subjects to which my attention was directed by the Department, and I have been employed, night and day, since I have been here, in writing my journal and making my report. I am still employed on the former. The latter I handed in to-day. It is highly favorable to the occupation of the Tortugas, and the Secretary on reading it complimented me by saying that it was an excellent report, which he should make the very best use of, and that it had thrown light upon the subject which the Government had not possessed before. He walked with Mr. Gedney and myself to the President, who, on examining the chart and reading the report, expressed himself in the most flattering terms. As soon as the journal is finished a report will, no doubt, be made to Congress on the subject. *All this egotism, however, is for the ears of the two houses and no others.* \* \* \* \* \*

“JOSIAH TATTNALL.”

## CHAPTER FIFTH.

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In command of the *Grampus*. Saves an American vessel, and renders valuable service to British shipping. Captures the *Montezuma*. His account of that capture. Cholera on board the *Grampus*. Relieves an American vessel detained in Mexican waters. Complimented by merchants and Insurance Companies. Assigned to special service in command of the barque *Pioneer*. Escorts Santa Anna to Vera Cruz. His conduct upon the arrival of the President in that city. Promoted to the grade of Commander, and placed in charge of the Boston Navy Yard. In command of the corvette *Fairfield*, and again in the Mediterranean. Official difficulty with Commodore Morgan. Assigned to the command of the corvette *Saratoga*. Official letter describing the disaster encountered by that ship. Congratulatory letters from brother officers.

On the 9th of March, 1831, Lieutenant Tattnall was ordered to the command of the *Grampus*, a large top-sail schooner, and assigned to duty in the West Indies and the Gulf of Mexico. July of that year found him with his vessel off the mouth of the river Brazos, on the coast of Texas, observing the movements of the Mexican squadron which was operating against that State then in revolt against Mexico. The naval authorities of the Spanish American Governments appeared to court a difficulty with the United States by an unauthorized interference with our merchant ships. Although the Mexican men-of-war at this time and place gave no occasion for armed intervention, the arrival of the *Grampus* was opportune in that it enabled Lieutenant Tattnall to save an American vessel which got on shore among the breakers, and which, but for this timely assistance, would inevitably have gone to

pieces. Services of consequence, rendered about this time by Lieutenant Tattnell to British subjects, were cordially acknowledged, with official thanks, by the English Admiral commanding the naval forces of the Crown on the North American station.

In August of the following year, while the *Grampus* was again at anchor off the Texas coast, an American vessel arrived, whose Captain reported to Lieutenant Tattnell that the Mexican war-schooner *Montezuma* had overhauled and boarded her at sea. He further stated that the Mexican Captain had treated himself and crew most shamefully, and had robbed his vessel of many valuable articles. The *Grampus* was got under way immediately and commenced beating up for Tampico bar,—the *Montezuma* being sixty miles to windward and having a start of twenty-four hours. Notwithstanding these disadvantages she reached Tampico bar two days ahead of the Mexican vessel and captured her within gunshot of another vessel of the same nationality and of like force, and in full view of the Mexican forts. The *Montezuma* had a crew of seventy-six men on board, and was armed with one heavy pivot gun and two pieces of lighter calibre. We present this spirited letter which vividly recalls the gallant exploit, and conveys a definite conception of the disagreeable results attendant upon the capture :

“UNITED STATES SCHOONER GRAMPUS

“AT SEA, 18th August, 1832.

“DEAR \*\*\*\* :

“I am at last on my way to the Balize to land the money I have on board, from whence I am not so sure but I shall sail for New York.

“Eight days since I was at anchor off Matamoras (Brazos de St. Jago), when an American schooner (the *William A. Turner*, of New York,) anchored near me, and the Captain informed me that the previous day his vessel had been boarded and himself and crew shamefully treated by the Mexican schooner *Montezuma*, which robbed him of a number of articles. The *Montezuma* was sixty miles to windward of me, and had twenty-four hours' start, and that (as she was bound to Tampico) in the short distance of two hundred and forty miles. Trusting, however, to good fortune, or what is better with so ill-starred a man as myself, to the speed of my good schooner, I started for Tampico in the forlorn hope of cutting her off and capturing her. In this I completely succeeded, beating her, with all her advantages of time and distance, two days. I beat up in four days against a strong current, and, on the second day after our arrival, had the gratification to make the *Montezuma* haul down her colors in the very mouth of her intended port, in sight of the forts, and in gun shot of another Mexican schooner at anchor off the harbor. The place and manner of capture were peculiarly fortunate, as it will, of course, (occurring so near them) be the subject of conversation with all classes at Tampico, and may cool any buccaneering propensities which their cruisers may entertain. The Mexican armed schooner outside, too, (one of the same squadron) is bound to Vera Cruz, and will, as an eye witness, spread the news in that direction, so that the benefits to our commerce resulting from the capture will be spread all along the coast.

“This is the pleasant part of the business. Now for the unpleasant. I took seventy-six prisoners in the *Montezuma*, all but five of whom are now on board. Among them are

forty soldiers (MEXICAN SOLDIERS!) and three women, and such a dirty, miserable, wretched scum of creation I never saw before. They have filled us, fore and aft, with l—e, and, (the weather is hot enough without such an occupation) this keeps us scratching from morning till night. I heard a poor fellow describe the effect this morning laughably : ‘They don’t jump,’ said he, ‘like a flea, but when they crawl down my back they feel like a rasp ; by —, they bite with all four legs!’

“We are short of water ; have but eight days’ meat on board, and but two days’ bread ; no cheese, no rice, no flour, no comforts of any kind ; and one hundred and forty odd hungry mouths to feed. I must, however, in eight and forty hours be in the way of falling in with vessels to and from the Mississippi. I shall keep this open until I do.

“Don’t allow anything to be published in consequence of this letter, as the Department will, no doubt, publish the matter *officially*. I got a letter from Boerum, dated the 20th ultimo, at Havana. He tells me that he has twenty-five letters for me, which, of course, now I shall miss receiving as he was about sailing for Campeche and Vera Cruz, and I shall, without doubt, take my prisoners to some State to the northward of Florida. The *Montezuma* mounts three guns (one on a pivot) and had seventy-six souls on board.

“24TH AUGUST.

“I am just entering the southwest pass of the Mississippi. We have been brought down to two ounces and a half of bread dust a day, but we are all well, and are filing our teeth for a supper to-night. I shall not go into the river, so don’t be uneasy. Until I hear from the District Attorney

I cannot determine to what port to return. As soon as I do determine, I will let you know. Good God! how long it appears since I heard from home. Tell my children how much I love them. More when at leisure. At present I have not closed my eyes for thirty-six hours, and I feel as though a l—se of twelve legs might bite me with impunity. \* \* \* \* \*

“JOSIAH TATTNALL.”

While on her way to land her prisoners in some of the Southern ports of the United States, cholera broke out on board the *Grampus*. Pensacola affording the nearest harbor, she ran in there and put her crew on shore in the Naval Yard until she could be thoroughly cleansed and disinfected. This done, Tattnell sailed for Tampico. The Mexicans were then detaining an American vessel which had taken on board two hundred thousand dollars, in specie, for transportation to the United States. Anxious to seize the money, a pretext was gotten up for holding the vessel. Pending the maturity of the rascally proceedings, the vessel was anchored, in charge of officers of the customs, under the guns of the Mexican fort. Learning the facts of the case, Tattnell proceeded in his boats over the bar, took the vessel from the hands of the Mexicans, brought her out, and convoyed her off the coast and beyond the reach of the Mexican cruisers.

During his term of service on this station, Lieutenant-Commandant Tattnell rendered efficient, protective aid to the English merchants at Vera Cruz, which drew from them a warm letter of thanks. By the Presidents of various Marine Insurance Companies in New Orleans was he similarly complimented for the protection afforded to property

covered by their policies. Their letters of acknowledgment were accompanied by a handsome service of silver, in substantial token of their appreciation of his good offices in behalf of American vessels in the waters of the Gulf.

At his own request he was, in December, 1832, relieved from the command of the *Grampus*. During the ensuing two years he was assigned to several details, among which may be mentioned experiments in ordnance, and the conduct of a tidal survey.

In November, 1835, upon the application of Commodore Thomas Ap Catesby Jones, he was detailed to the command of the barque *Pioneer*,—a member of the squadron forming the United States Exploring Expedition to the South Seas. Circumstances to which we need not allude caused an entire change in the detail of the commanding officers of this expedition. Previous, however, to these changes, Tattnall was ordered by the Navy Department, with the vessel he was then commanding, upon a special service. It will be remembered that the war which the Texans were then waging for independence culminated in the decisive victory over the Mexicans at San Jacinto. Santa Anna who, in person, commanded the army of Mexico, was there taken prisoner. Embarrassed by the presence of their distinguished captive, and fearing his assassination by friends of those who by his bloody command had been barbarously shot to death in cold blood at the Alamo, the authorities of Texas sent him to the United States and turned him over to the Government at Washington. It was at once resolved by the United States to send him back to Mexico, and Tattnall was selected to execute this mission.

President Santa Anna and his principal aid,—General Almonte,—having been received on board the *Pioneer*, then

lying at Norfolk, Tattnall at once proceeded to sea, bound for Vera Cruz. These gentlemen fully appreciated the danger they were incurring in returning to Mexico under existing circumstances. Defeated in a general engagement which compassed the liberation of a State whose open rebellion he was seeking to crush,—the army upon which he mainly relied for the maintenance of his supremacy and the perpetuation of his political power scattered by the followers of General Houstoun,—with but a single companion, and about to be returned in weakness and misfortune to his country,—Santa Anna was under the impression that his rivals and enemies would cause him to be shot down so soon as he landed at Vera Cruz. In this conviction General Almonte fully shared. His only hope of salvation lay in the protecting presence of Lieutenant Tattnall in the full uniform of an officer of the United States Navy. To his honor, however, be it said, he gave no expression to this trust, nor did he allow his aid to allude to it in the hearing of any one. Divining the thought, however, and appreciating the exigency of the situation, Tattnall determined to afford him whatever countenance and relief his presence might command. Upon coming to anchor, the news was quickly spread through Vera Cruz that the former President of the Republic was on board, and would soon land. Crowds collected on the mole, and several regiments were soon formed in its vicinity. The city was astir with excitement. In the language of an eye-witness “matters looked squally.” The unstable elements were in violent commotion and no one could foretell the result. As he was on the eve of leaving the ship, Lieutenant Tattnall, in full uniform, taking Santa Anna by the arm said: “General, I will see you to your hotel.” His escort was gladly ac-



cepted. As they stepped from the barge upon the wharf and walked up, arm in arm, there ensued a profound silence in the multitude of late so vociferous and swayed by conflicting emotions. As they approached the soldiery, a change appeared to come over their thoughts and purposes. The salute was given, the bands struck up, and the colors drooped amidst the most enthusiastic vivas from soldiers, citizens, and rabble. So impressed was every one with the bold, manly manner in which this entrance was made into the city, that the resolution formed in advance to shoot the returning President on sight was converted into an enthusiastic welcome. General Almonte afterwards stated that the uniform and companionship of Lieutenant Tattnell, and the fearlessness of the entire proceeding saved Santa Anna from the apprehended calamity, and compassed the wonderful revulsion of sentiment in the masses then present. In the language of one\* who witnessed the proceeding: "Tattnell knew at the time the danger of the move, but danger seemed always a welcome guest to him. He was made a lion of in Vera Cruz."

Beholding Lieutenant Tattnell attending their President as though escorting him under instructions from the United States and rendering respect and honor to him as the Chief Magistrate of a friendly power, these mercurial and unstable peoples passed rapidly from one extreme to the other. Having seen him safely to his hotel, Lieutenant Tattnell was about to return to his ship when he was entreated by Santa Anna to remain with him as his guest. The President felt insecure until he could rally his friends about him, and the presence of the Lieutenant materially contributed to his composure during this uncertain period. As the

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\* Lieutenant Geo. T. Sinclair.

guest of the Mexican President he spent several days in Vera Cruz, and accompanied him to his country seat in the mountains on the road to Mexico. When he bade him farewell he was surrounded by his adherents, and all likelihood of opposition had subsided. But for the peculiar assistance rendered by Lieutenant Tattnall on this occasion, the probability is that Santa Anna would have encountered speedy death at the hands of the disaffected Mexicans.

Upon returning to Norfolk, Virginia, in the *Pioneer*, the change in the commanding officers of the Exploring Expedition, previously alluded to, was carried into effect, and Lieutenant Tattnall was for some time on leave of absence, with occasional orders for special duties of brief duration.

In 1838 he was promoted to the rank of Commander and placed in charge of the Boston Navy Yard. Here he remained until the expiration of the period usually allotted to such commands. With Commodore Perry was he associated in April, 1840, in ordnance experiments. On the 2d of March in the following year he was ordered to the command of the corvette *Fairfield*, fitting out for the Mediterranean station, and in July sailed for Gibraltar, conveying Commodore Charles Morgan,—the Commander-in-Chief of that station,—whose flag was, for the time being, hoisted on the *Fairfield*. From the day that Commodore Morgan came on board the *Fairfield* until he left that vessel upon her arrival at Port Mahon,—the headquarters of the Mediterranean squadron,—he and his Secretary were the guests of Commander Tattnall, who positively refused to have those gentlemen at his table on any other terms.

Tattnall's merits as an officer were strikingly exhibited while he commanded the *Fairfield*. That vessel was on all occasions remarkable for the promptitude and perfection

of her movements. Most efficient was the drill of her crew. Had the opportunity presented itself, the *Fairfield* would certainly have won for her officers and men a brilliant record.

Unfortunately for his own reputation, Commodore Morgan assumed towards all the commanding officers under him a position totally and flagrantly violative of law. While obeying the illegal orders of the Commodore, Commander Tattnall appealed to the Secretary of the Navy for redress, and because he had so appealed was arrested and sent to the United States under charges. Immediately upon their examination, the Navy Department dismissed the charges, and informed Commander Tattnall that he was at liberty to return at once to the command of his ship, or, if he preferred, to take charge of another vessel, much her superior, which had just been launched and was fitting out. The Department visited Commodore Morgan with its official censure, and disapproved his treatment of Tattnall. Commander Tattnall's response to the offer of the Secretary of the Navy that he should return to his ship then on a station most pleasant to him and eagerly sought by officers of all grades, was entirely characteristic: "I have no wish, sir," said he, "to be instrumental in mortifying Commodore Morgan further than is necessary to vindicate my official honor. My return to the station he now commands could not be otherwise than officially humiliating to him, and could do the service no good." He was thereupon complimented with the command of the corvette *Saratoga*, a new ship, and one of the largest vessels of her class which at that time had been constructed by any naval power. Of one thousand tons burthen, she carried a battery of eighteen 32-pounder guns, and four 8-inch shell-guns. She was built and equipped at the Portsmouth, New Hampshire, Navy

Yard. Sailing for New York on the 16th of March, 1843, the *Saratoga* encountered a serious disaster, the details of which are fully presented in the following letter from Commander Tattnall to the Secretary of the Navy :

“U. S. SHIP SARATOGA,  
“PORTSMOUTH, N. H., March 19th, 1843.

“SIR:

“I informed you yesterday that the sloop *Saratoga* under my command had returned to Portsmouth, having been dismasted on the 17th inst., and I have now the honor to make you a more detailed report of the circumstances which caused that disaster.

“We sailed from Portsmouth at 11 A. M. on the 16th, with a light breeze from the northwest, which died away to a calm after having carried us clear of the harbor. In the afternoon a moderate breeze sprung up from the eastward, with a strong appearance of shifting to the westward. At 11 P. M. we had passed Newburyport, and were heading to windward of Cape Ann, when the wind shifted to east southeast, and increased suddenly to a severe gale, with snow and sleet, obliging us to carry a heavy press of canvas to keep off shore, the snow and sleet, which froze as they fell, coating everything with ice and rendering it impossible to furl the sails, as the increase of wind and sea obliged us to take them in. The main-yard was manned three times and the men worked with the best spirit, but the canvas was so frozen and stiff that their efforts were unavailing. On the 17th, at 3 A. M., the ship continuing to drive into the land, preparations were made for anchoring and cutting away the masts. At 9 A. M. we found ourselves close to the light house on the Isle of Shoals, and bore up under

the close reefed foresail and main-topsail in the hope of regaining the harbor of Portsmouth. This was done by the advice and under the direction of the Portsmouth pilot, who was still on board. The attempt was hazardous, but was our best chance, and its failure should not be charged to the pilot, who evinced a decision and steadiness which confirmed my confidence in him. The heavy sea, and probably the tide (although allowance was made, in the course we steered, for both), drove us to leeward, the atmosphere being so hazy that we could not see more than half a mile in any direction.

“We first made the breakers a little on the weather bow and close on board; bearing up to avoid them we found ourselves standing directly on to a rocky shore extending for some distance on both bows, and on which the sea was breaking heavily. Not a moment was to be lost. The ship was brought to the wind, both bowers let go, the chains veered to the clinch in the teers, 150 fathoms on each, and the masts cut away. We were near enough to the shore to be benefited by the under tow, and rode out the remainder of the gale in safety.

“In the afternoon the weather having moderated and cleared up, we found ourselves on the rocky coast between the mouth of the harbor of Portsmouth and the sands of Rye, and but a quarter of a mile from the breakers at low water.

“I cannot, sir, close this disastrous report without acknowledging the zealous aid I received from Mr. Armstrong, the First Lieutenant, and from every other officer in the ship; nor is this acknowledgment confined to the sea officers alone, all having exerted themselves to the utmost. The Marine officer, Lieutenant Doughty, had been on deck the

whole morning encouraging the marines by his example ; and, indeed, the spirit and steadiness of the officers and men are best shown by the fact that in eight minutes after the order was given, the ship was anchored and all the masts over the side without injuring one man out of a crew of one hundred and seventy.

“As soon as the abatement of the sea and wind allowed a communication with the shore, I received from Commander Lewis Goldsborough, commanding this station, (who has placed me under lasting obligations,) such prompt and judicious treatment as enabled me to get the ship without difficulty into the harbor.

“I have, sir, limited this report to principal occurrences, presuming that you will order a Court of Inquiry into my conduct, and earnestly soliciting you to do so,

“I am, sir, with great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Commander.”

To the Honorable A. P. Upshur, Secretary of the Navy.

As indicating their appreciation of his conduct during the great peril through which he had just passed, we cannot refrain from introducing the following extracts from some of the letters received by Commander Tattnall from brother officers of high repute, whose generous sympathy and cordial congratulations were very gratifying to him.

Under date March 23d, 1843 :

“DEAR TATTNALL :

“Allow me to congratulate you on your narrow escape from a watery grave, with that of your officers and crew,

and also on the good qualities of your noble ship. Mr. Boggs, of the Navy Department, has just read me a most interesting account from his brother, Lieutenant Boggs, which letter he has also read to the Secretary, and, much to his satisfaction, he is delighted with your management of the ship. As evidence of which, he has issued orders for her to be refitted without delay. A lady of my family was at the Secretary's house on Monday evening when the sad news arrived of her total loss; he was greatly disturbed, 'yet,' he said, 'he had every confidence in her commander, for that she was in the hands of one of the first officers in the navy.'” \* \* \* \* \*

Under date March 24th, 1843 :

“MY DEAR TATTNALL :

“I have just seen the safe arrival of your ship announced at Portsmouth, and hasten to congratulate you on your good and bad fortune. Your situation must have been perilous indeed, and but for your decision and prompt action your fate would have been inevitable. I truly rejoice, my dear friend, that the loss your ship sustained is so small, and that your presence of mind and decision of character not only saved your ship, but not a single life was lost. Orders have, no doubt, been given to equip her again for sea. You must have faith in the old adage, a bad beginning ends well.” \* \* \* \* \*

Under date March 27th, 1843 :

“DEAR TATTNALL :

“Your letter of the 22d inst. is received. I was upon the point of writing to you to congratulate you upon your having got clear of that tremendous blow, with the loss

only of your spars, for I much feared (and so did we all here) for the safety of your ship and lives. It blew here that night almost a hurricane, and we were all hoping on board the *Hudson* that you might not have sailed, and were expressing our fears, in case you were out, of your safety. Thank God it is no worse; and the universal feeling here is that you have been devilish lucky in getting off so cheaply. Lieutenant Boggs has given us all the details of that dreadful night's work and suffering, and your conduct and seamanship have been most highly commended."

\* \* \* \* \*

Under date April 3d, 1843 :

"MY DEAR JO :

\* \* \* \* \*

"In regard to your shipwreck, dear Jo, I heard nothing but what it would have made you vain to listen to. Your brother officers have full confidence not only in your chivalry, but in all the high attributes of your official station. You receive, as you well merit, from everybody the highest praise for saving your ship and the lives of your crew. Unless your health has materially suffered, nothing better could have happened to you short of a good fight. Say nothing more than what you may already have said about a Court of Inquiry. All military courts are becoming odious, and nothing of the kind can be necessary to your reputation."

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## CHAPTER SIXTH.

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In command of the *Saratoga* on the African Station. War declared between the United States and Mexico. Assigned to the gun-boat *Spitfire*. In command of the *Mosquito Division*. Covers disembarkation of the army under General Scott. Shells Vera Cruz and the Castle of St. Juan d'Ulloa. Engages the Castle and bombards the city on the 23d. Commander Tattnall's letter describing the action. Reduction of Tuspan. Admiral Buchanan's narrative of the affair. Commander Tattnall wounded. Captain Whittle's account. Complimented with a sword, for his gallantry, by the State of Georgia.

After refitting, the *Saratoga* sailed for New York, where she awaited the arrival of Commodore M. C. Perry. Upon coming on board he hoisted his flag on that vessel and in her proceeded to his command on the west coast of Africa. The station was reached in due course, when the Commodore transferred his flag to the frigate *Macedonian*. The duties of a cruiser on the west coast of Africa are onerous and monotonous. The opportunities for relaxation and pleasure, common to most stations, are there entirely wanting. A dangerous climate and hot suns necessitate the observance of constant care for the preservation of the health of officers and men. Communications with home occur only at rare and irregular intervals. Hence the African Station was unpopular in the service. To protect legitimate American commerce, and break up the slave trade so far as it was abetted by or carried on in United States vessels, were the duties of a naval force mounting eighty guns then stationed in those waters. The presence of these vessels was also designed to render more respectable, in the eyes of the barbarian nations which surrounded

them, the colonies of Liberia. That the *Saratoga* performed good service while upon this uninteresting station may be readily inferred from the "Journal of an African Cruiser," written by her purser, and published in 1848.\*

After a cruise of about two years, Commander Tattnall returned with his ship to New York. His health having been much impaired, he was granted a leave of absence. While enjoying this relaxation amid the pleasures of home and in the companionship of friends, war was declared between the United States and the Republic of Mexico. He thereupon immediately volunteered his services to the Government for active duty in the presence of the enemy.

Several small steamers,—suited to the navigation of the waters of the Mexican coast, but of a tonnage below the grade of a Commander's proper command,—had just been added to the Gulf Squadron. Tattnall, familiar as he was with the character of the coast, well knew that if he expected to get at the enemy he must have a vessel of light draught. He therefore urged his assignment to the steam gun-boat *Spitfire*. His request was allowed, and to that vessel was he ordered on the 2d of June, 1846. Sailing from New York with a bearer of dispatches, he reached Chagres in safety; and, proceeding thence, joined the Commodore commanding the United States naval forces on the Mexican coast, at the anchorage of Sacrificios below Vera Cruz. Immediately upon the concentration of that portion of the squadron disengaged from the duty of blockading the coast, the lighter vessels,—consisting of the steamers *Spitfire* and *Vixen* and four other armed vessels,—were formed into a light division, denominated the *Mosquito Division*, and placed under Tattnall's immediate command.

\* New York, John Wiley.

On the 9th of March, 1847, Commodore Perry's Squadron, then at the anchorage of Anton Lisardo,—which was the rendezvous for the transports conveying troops and materials destined to act against Vera Cruz,—got under way, with the steam transports in company, and proceeded to the anchorage of Sacrificios, just south of and in full view of the city. Here the *Mosquito Division* under Tattnall ran close into the beach and opened fire in line to cover the disembarkation of the land army. A little before sunset the first division of troops had landed, and before ten o'clock that night twelve thousand men were on shore,—not the slightest accident or the loss of a single life having occurred. With the siege and reduction of Vera Cruz we are all familiar, and the story of that masterly achievement need not be here repeated.

Responding to general instructions received from the Commodore that he should keep his division under way in shore and occupy positions best calculated to annoy the enemy, at day dawn on the 10th Commander Tattnall advanced under Point Honoros to a position within a short mile of the city and the Castle of St. Juan d'Ulloa, upon both of which, from the *Spitfire*, he opened a fire which was maintained for two hours and until he was recalled by the Commodore. The return fire from the city and the Castle, although heavy, fortunately caused no material injury to the vessel. The eyes of the navy and of the army were upon him during this gallant engagement; and Commander Tattnall by his perseverance and courage won the admiration of them both. The *Spitfire's* shells fell in the heart of the city, reaching the Plaza and the neighborhood of the gate of the market. This fact was announced in a Vera Cruz paper which found its way to the squadron, and

corrected an impression obtaining among some of the officers of the fleet, who, at a remove of three miles, and despite the smoke of the bombardment, declared that they could perceive the shells bursting short of their objective points. As the army batteries had not then opened, there could be no possible doubt as to the source whence those shells came which exploded in the Plaza and at the gate of the market. Commander Tattall received a complimentary message from General Worth, who, at the time, was advancing to the investment of the city. In it he stated that the action of the *Spitfire* had proved of essential service to him, as it had discovered the positions of many of the enemy's guns.

By the 22d,—several of the land batteries being in readiness, and the Governor having refused General Scott's summons to surrender,—a mortar battery, at a remove of eight hundred yards, opened fire upon the city and maintained it during the rest of the day and the ensuing night. At daylight, the next morning, Tattall got his division of two steamers and five schooners under way. One schooner was directed to remain under Point Honoros and open a rapid fire on the city, while the two steamers,—each with two schooners in tow,—stood out from the land as though intending to rejoin the squadron at Sacrificios. Having cleared the shoal off Point Honoros, the division,—Tattall leading in the *Spitfire*,—stood directly for the Castle of St. Juan d'Ulloa, until within grape distance from the Bastion of St. Jago on the main, and but a very little further from the Castle itself. Until this position was gained not a shot had been exchanged. The division now opened a violent cannonade against the heart of the city, which was responded to by the Castle and the Bastion.

The early hour and the rapid movement of the division either took the Mexicans by surprise, or they were desirous of alluring the vessels to what they deemed certain destruction. To the fire of the Castle and the Bastion was quickly added that of the city. Nothing apparently saved these vessels from annihilation save the fact that they were kept in constant motion. The Mexican fire of solid shot, shell, and grape, was very heavy and lashed the water into a foam. Although the ships were struck and somewhat damaged, not a man was killed on board. Such escape seemed miraculous. For one hour was this extraordinary action continued, when the division retired in obedience to the Commodore's signal. Thousands of admiring eyes, which watched this daring affair, expected each moment to witness the destruction of the division and scarcely looked for the safe return of the vessels which composed it. As Commander Tattnall drew out of the line of fire and moved down to Sacrificios to rejoin the squadron, cheer upon cheer arose from the troops along the shore. The Commodore expressed his gratification at the heroic conduct of the affair, and directed his appreciation of their gallantry to be communicated to the officers and men engaged. The eyes of the country were now upon Commander Tattnall, and his name became more than ever a synonym for valor and daring.

The following letter, penned on the spot, and never intended for the public eye, will now be perused with peculiar interest :

“U. S. STEAMER SPITFIRE, 25th March, 1847,

“ISLAND OF SACRIFICIOS.

“MY DEAR \*\*\*\* :

“It blows a heavy norther, which furnishes leisure for

me to write; although the vessel is so unsteady that it is troublesome to do so. I will briefly detail to you the operations of the navy and army up to this date.

“On the morning of the 9th March, the squadron, and several army steamers having ten thousand troops on board, left Anton Lisardo (an anchorage seven miles from this) and anchored here in the afternoon sufficiently early to enable us to disembark the troops, to cover which movement the *Spitfire*, *Vixen*, and three schooners were anchored close in with the beach. It was expected that we should have had to contend with batteries erected among the sand hills in the vicinity, but no enemy was seen, with the exception of a few cavalry which a shot from this vessel and one from a schooner sufficed to drive off. The landing was beautiful, the troops landing on the beach with great rapidity, and seizing the lofty sand hills where the standards of the regiments were soon planted. The night was passed quietly, but at dawn of day I weighed with the *Spitfire* and took a position under Point Honoros, whence I threw shot and shells into the city for two hours, and until called off by a signal from the Commodore. The army was occupied from that date (the 10th) until the 22d inst. in getting their battering guns, mortars, and ordnance stores on shore, in which they received great and cheerful assistance from the navy. In the interval, the enemy at times opened on them a fire from mortars and cannon, producing some casualties. Captain Albertis, of the artillery, was killed, and Lieutenant Colonel Dickerson, of the Carolina Volunteers, wounded.

“On the 22d, a part of the mortars having been placed in battery, and ready to open, the town was summoned, through a flag of truce, to surrender. This was refused, and as soon as our flag was again within our lines, the

town fired two shots in defiance. This was answered from our lines, and was the signal for the *Spitfire*, *Vixen*, and five schooners to take a position off Point Honoros and aid in the bombardment. I forgot to say that when on the 10th I fired on the town from this position with the *Spitfire* alone, the enemy opened a fire of shells on me from St. Juan d'Ulloa and two of the town batteries, which fell and exploded around me without damage. On this occasion, although they fired a few shells at us, their principal fire was directed at the batteries of the army. On the morning of the 23d, at dawn of day, I weighed anchor in company with the *Vixen*, each with two schooners in tow (leaving the fifth schooner to attract the attention of the enemy), and stood out from the land as though intending to rejoin the squadron at Sacrificios until, having cleared the shoal off Point Honoros, I stood directly for the Castle of St. Juan d'Ulloa, until within grape distance of the Castle of St. Iago on the main, and but a little further from that of St. Juan d'Ulloa. Here I opened a fire directly into the city, which was replied to from both castles. I must, from their not having opened on me before, have surprised them. They, however, made up for the delay by a very heavy fire of shot and shell, which burst and fell all around us. In an hour I was recalled by signal. The affair took place in sight of the whole squadron and the right wing (Worth's) of the army, and is spoken of (I am happy to tell you) in enthusiastic terms by both services. We were cheered by the officers of the army from the neighboring heights, and Commodore Perry (Connor having given up the command) has directed the commanders of all vessels engaged to express to the crews his sense of their gallantry. All expected to see us sunk,

and that we escaped without loss is a miracle. The shot and shell rained around us and kept the water in a foam, and yet but three of the vessels were struck, two of the schooners and the *Spitfire*; the latter by a shell which exploded directly under the quarter and knocked a plank out of the quarter boat. Not a man was hurt. Edward and Josiah were both with me, and were perfectly cool. All the four Generals, Scott, Worth, Patterson, and Twiggs, have complimented me. On the same day on which this occurred (23d), six heavy guns were sent on shore from the squadron and manned by the seamen of the frigates and sloops-of-war. They commenced a fire on the morning of the 24th, in conjunction with the army batteries, and did themselves great honor. Our acquaintance, Aulick, commanded the first day and had four killed and two wounded; thus (if I fired the first naval shot against the town and Castle) winning the honor of having the first naval blood drawn from his command. Lieutenant Baldwin (of the *St. Mary's*) was among the wounded. Yesterday Captain Isaac Mayo, of the *Mississippi*, commanded, and silenced all the batteries opposed to him. He had two killed and several wounded, among the former (I am sorry to say) poor young Shubrick, the son of Commander Irving Shubrick. He had just arrived in the *Mississippi*, and brought me a letter from dear H——, whom he saw at Wilmington. He went to the battery full of animation, and had scarcely reached it when his head was severed from his body. His mother was a Miss Dupont, a sister of Commander Dupont of the navy. He was a fine lad, and is deeply lamented.

“I landed and walked to our battery on the first day, and on reaching it saw stretched in a cart and dead a most noble seaman, an old boatswain's mate of mine in the



*Saratoga.* His fine manly face, calm and unchanged, I could not mistake, and on asking his name had my fears confirmed. Another poor fellow was lying in a cart severely wounded, to whom I offered a few words of condolence. In a few moments after, and when they had removed him to what was deemed a place of safety, he was again wounded. There was ill luck for you. The army have, of course, been doing the chief work in the bombardment, but I have mentioned the navy more particularly as appertaining to myself. The army has been disappointed by the non-arrival, at the time expected, of the larger part of the mortars, but yesterday they had sixteen in battery, and will, doubtless, have more to-morrow.

“They do their work admirably, and are a credit to that noble institution, *West Point*. The town has, doubtless, suffered dreadfully, and yesterday they sent out a flag begging that the women and children might be allowed to retire. This General Scott very properly refused, on the ground that he had offered and they declined it before he commenced the bombardment, and that now, in justice to his own troops, he could not suffer the garrison to be disembarrassed and freed from the necessity of feeding them. This seems cruel, but is just. The Castle will probably have to be starved out, and the sooner this is done the less will be our loss of life. It is blowing so hard a gale from the northward that we have not communicated to-day with the shore, and my account of matters is up to last evening. The firing was continued on shore the whole of last night, and doubtless I shall hear of further casualties. I forgot to mention that Captain Vinton, of the artillery, (a very fine officer), was killed at one of the army batteries, and the army has probably lost in killed and wounded some

thirty men. I think that as soon as this norther ends the town will surrender. If not, it is intended to take it by assault, the navy coöperating with the army.

“I shall keep you constantly advised of your sons and myself being in existence, and shall keep this open until a vessel sails, which, it is thought, will be to-morrow. Commodore Connor has been relieved by Commodore Perry, and in a manner and at a time most mortifying. Connor is ill, and I feel deeply for him. When I took leave of him in his sick bed, he thanked me for the friendly support he had received from me, and expressed himself in warm terms of regard.

“The *Spitfire* jumps about so, in the short sea in which we are anchored, that I can scarcely write legibly, and the general tumbling about of cabin articles confuses my ideas to such an extent that I can hardly disentangle them sufficiently to write English intelligibly. *Don't let this letter be seen out of the family, and suffer no part of it to reach the papers.*

“The gale still rages, and three or four transports have been driven from their moorings and forced on shore. One brig dragged foul of the frigate *Potomac* and lost her masts, and is now riding, by a hawser, to that vessel. We have a norther about once in three days, and this one is of unusual violence. They interfere sadly with the operations of the army. The soil is of sand, which drifts and fills up the trenches.

“I have just finished a letter to dear H\*\*\*\*, in reply to that she sent by poor young Shubrick. The motto she chose for the seal of her letter brought the tear to my eye. God bless her! Remind all the children that I love them, and tell T\*\*\* and M\*\*\* that I rejoice to learn such favor-

able accounts of their improvement. T\*\*\* must write me a letter, and M\*\*\* must send me a beautiful piece of her needlework. I shall be proud to show the letter and the needlework to every one. The gale is at length at an end (26th March), after having driven on shore twenty-five vessels and dismasted several others.

"I am ordered to cruise to the northward and westward of the town, communicating with the left wing of the army.

"We have this day (29th March) taken possession of the Castle and city, both of which surrendered yesterday. The loss of life in the city was terrible, as it fell chiefly on the inhabitants (women and children, the men being under arms with the troops). The troops were sheltered by the works and lost, report says, but forty killed, while the inhabitants lost from seven to eight hundred. I am told that the city is greatly injured. Many foreigners have been killed, among them the daughter of the English Consul.

\* \* \* \* \*

"JOSIAH TATTNALL."

Upon the surrender of Vera Cruz, on the 29th of March Commodore Perry turned his attention to the capture of towns along the coast which were still occupied by the Mexican forces. Alvarado was evacuated upon the approach of the combined naval and land expedition dispatched for its capture, and was garrisoned by the army of occupation. The squadron next prepared to attack Tusan. As this city was situated some distance up the river of the same name, and as the bar at its mouth was both shallow and dangerous, it became necessary to organize an expedition of light steamers and boats. The masts of the *Spitfire* were taken out of her and she was lightened of all stores and munitions not absolutely required on the

moment. Bearing the flag of the Commander-in-Chief, and with a division of boats from the *Germantown*, commanded by the gallant Commander Franklin Buchanan (afterwards an Admiral in the navy of the Confederate States), in tow, the *Spitfire* led in over the bar and commenced the action. We give the narrative of the capture in the language of the distinguished officer whose honored name we have just uttered: "The *Germantown's* boats were towed by the *Spitfire* that they might be near the Commodore so as to receive the earliest orders to 'land and storm the forts.' I went on board as the expedition approached the first fort, the *Pana*, situated on a prominent hill about eighty feet above the river, and armed with 32-pounder guns. The fire from the enemy was very severe, and the *Spitfire* was frequently struck. During this time I had an opportunity of witnessing the coolness and gallant bearing of Commander Tattnall, whose guns were not idle, as the enemy can testify. The fate of the expedition depended mainly on the capture of that fort, for we had two others to encounter before we could capture the town. The *Spitfire's* guns silenced the fort for a few moments, when the Commodore's order to 'land and storm' was given. About this time a grape or canister shot from the *Pana* fort wounded Tattnall in the arm severely. The boats were successful, and in an hour or two we had possession of the three forts and the city of Tuspan. Notwithstanding his wound, Tattnall retained the command of his steamer and cared but little for it, as we were successful. As usual, his energies were devoted to his duties."

Another brother officer\* alluding to this affair, writes as follows :

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\* Captain Whittle.

“VIRGINIA, June 30, 1871.

“EDITOR REPUBLICAN :

“In justice to my dear old friend, Tattnell, it is proper that a word should be said, and I say it to you. If any man knew him, I did. If any man *loved* him (that is *the* word), I did. Besides frequent occasional and most intimate association with him, both personal and official, in a career of service running through forty years, it so chanced that, some thirty years ago, I was his executive officer for upwards of two years on foreign service. I was consequently brought into the most intimate and confidential intercourse with him at all times and under all circumstances. In the attack on Tuspan, to which you refer, where in the *Spitfire*, a small steamer, he led in, having my division in a sailing gunboat in tow, I was by his side and we were both wounded. It was doubtful if the bar at the entrance of the river could be passed safely. There was surf upon it at the time. To render assurance doubly sure, it was at my suggestion that he hauled alongside the *Raritan* frigate, and, using her main yard for the purpose, took his masts out and left them on her deck. While under a raking and tolerably well sustained fire from the forts, he turned to me and said, his fine gray eye flashing with a light which I can neither describe nor forget: ‘———, war may not make life *longer*, but it makes it a vast deal *broader*. It is a glorious pastime!’”

The wound which Commander Tattnell received in this engagement was in his right arm; and, although severe, did not disable him from the command of the *Spitfire* during the continuance of the action. With the fall of Tuspan the entire Mexican coast from Texas to Yucatan passed

practically into the possession of the United States forces. The labors of the navy were virtually at an end, and Tatt-  
nall, with the sanction of his commanding officer, made  
arrangements to join the army in its movement upon the  
City of Mexico. He purposed going in the capacity of aid  
to General Twiggs. This intention, however, he was re-  
luctantly compelled to abandon in consequence of the con-  
dition of his wounded arm and the enfeebled state of his  
health. In the judgment of the attending surgeons his  
return to the United States was deemed necessary to his  
restoration. There being no further active work for the  
navy, Tattnall consented to be relieved of the command  
of the *Spitfire*, and in June, 1847, returned home.

The Legislature of Georgia,\* at its first session held after  
his return from the Gulf of Mexico, passed a unanimous  
resolution of thanks, and voted him a sword with this in-  
scription: "The State of Georgia to Commander Josiah  
Tattnall, as a tribute to his gallantry in the Mexican war."  
This sword was in due season presented by the Governor  
of the State, and is now held in conditional trust by the  
Georgia Historical Society in Savannah.

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\*The text of this resolution is as follows: "Whereas, Captain Josiah Tattnall, of the United States Navy, a native of the State of Georgia, has greatly distinguished himself in every portion of his professional career, and has illustrated the State which gave him birth, by uniform devotion and bravery in the service of that gallant arm of the national defense, and more recently at the siege and bombardment of Vera Cruz, as Commander of the 'Mosquito Fleet,' signalized himself by the most noble and heroic conduct and added new laurels to his service, and greatly honored Georgia:

"Therefore be it unanimously resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Georgia in General Assembly met, That his Excellency the Governor cause to be procured an elegant sword, suitable to an officer of his rank, to be inscribed with proper devices, and present the same to Captain Tattnall in the name of the State, together with a copy of this resolution."

Assented to December 29th, 1847.

See Session Laws of 1847, pp. 321, 322.

## CHAPTER SEVENTH.

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Again in command of the Boston Navy Yard. Promoted to the grade of Captain, and assigned to the command of the steam frigate *Saranac*. Detailed for special service in Cuban waters. Prudent and efficient conduct of affairs while in command of that station. In charge of the Pensacola Navy Yard. Yellow fever epidemic. Threatened with violence. Ordered to the command of the frigate *Independence*. Defective equipment of this vessel. On duty at the Pacific Station. Charges, preferred by Commodore Mervine, dismissed by the Navy Department. Promoted to the grade of Rear Flag Officer, and ordered to the command of the naval forces in the East India and China seas. The *Powhatan* his flag-ship. Movements and services while on this station. Treaty concluded with Japan.

On the first of October, 1847, Commander Tattnall was ordered to the command of the Navy Yard at Boston. This position he held for two years, and then received a leave of absence. On the 5th of February, 1850, he was promoted to the grade of Captain, and three weeks afterwards was assigned to the command of the steam frigate *Saranac*, a new vessel then fitting out at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This ship was under detail to form one of the East India squadron. While in the Potomac river, in May of that year, he received secret and important orders from the Government to proceed with all dispatch to the Cuban waters, first touching at Havana. An attempt at revolution, in Cuba, against Spanish rule, aided by filibusters from the United States, had just occurred. It was not the first effort of the kind, and the Spanish squadron had resolved to capture all vessels suspected of being engaged in the service of the filibusters. Our naval ships then in Cuban waters had

received instructions which compelled their commanders to resist all such attempts on the part of the Spanish men-of-war. The United States authorities suddenly were made aware of the fact that vessels had escaped from their ports which were destined for Cuba in aid of the revolutionists. Apprehending the probable capture of some of them by the Spaniards, and their forcible recapture by United States ships-of-war, Tattnall was ordered to make the speediest passage to Havana, and, on arrival, to take command of all United States naval vessels present in Cuban waters, and act according to circumstances. He was to avoid all possible offense to the Spanish Government, and at the same time uphold the honor of our flag.

The *Saranac* was put in sailing trim with the utmost dispatch, and set out on her voyage. So hasty was her departure, that she was unprovided with suitable charts of the coasts of Florida and Cuba, and lacked a proper supply of nautical instruments. Captain Tattnall, however, relied upon his knowledge, acquired during previous cruises, for the successful navigation of his vessel.

The passage to Havana was made with all possible expedition. Just before his arrival, Captain Tattnall fell in with the United States sloop-of-war *Albany*,—Commander V. M. Randolph,—cruising off that port; and, accompanied by that ship, entered the harbor. Commander Randolph's object in cruising off this port was to intercept a Spanish frigate and forcibly wrest from her one or two American vessels which she had captured while attempting, as it was alleged, to invade the island with their crews, and which she was then purposing to take into Havana. While appreciating the motives and spirited conduct of Commander Randolph, Captain Tattnall deemed it best, under the cir-



cumstances, to adopt a different course. So soon as the *Saranac* and the *Albany* came to anchor, Captain Tattnell waited upon the Captain-General and informed him that while it was not his desire or purpose to seek a meeting with the Spanish frigate, nevertheless, if he did fall in with her at sea, he would certainly attempt the recapture of any American vessels she might have in her possession. These American vessels having been taken while violating the recognized principles of international law and acting in disregard of the proclamation of the President of the United States, it was the design of the Spanish authorities to bring them to Havana. So impressed was the Captain-General with the determination of Captain Tattnell to retake these vessels if found at sea, that he immediately issued instructions that they should not depart from the port in which they then were. Thus was prevented the risk of a collision which might have caused an open rupture between the two governments. Captain Tattnell's conduct in this matter was fully approved by the authorities of the United States; and, it is said, his letter acquainting the Department with his action and the reasons upon which it was based, was handsomely complimented at a Cabinet meeting where it was read and pronounced a model report. The moderate course which he felt bound to adopt was so much at variance with his impulses, that he remarked to a brother officer that he experienced great difficulty in overcoming his own inclination which prompted him to approve and participate in the plans which his friend, Commander Randolph, designed to pursue.

It was insisted by the United States Government that vessels carrying its flag should not be subject to examination by the armed vessels of other nationalities. Upon Captain

Tattnall's arrival in Havana the situation of affairs was briefly this: The American vessels detected in flagrant violation of international law and the President's proclamation had been captured, were already in a Spanish Cuban port, and could not there be molested by United States cruisers. Should they be brought out of that port, however, and be found upon the high seas under convoy of the Spanish frigate which had been ordered to bring them to Havana, Tattnall assured the Captain-General he would then attempt their recapture. This placed the matter of peace or war practically within the determination of that official. If the *status quo* remained unchanged, the capture of the vessels claiming the protection of the United States would then form the subject of negotiation between the two governments. As a result of the conference, the Captain-General reconsidered his determination, and countermanded his order to bring the captured vessels to Havana under convoy of Spanish vessels of war. The captured ships remained in the port where they then were under the guns of Spanish forts, within Spanish waters, and amenable to the jurisdiction of Spanish law. Thus, through Captain Tattnall's prudent and wise action, was the impending rupture between the two powers avoided.

Although his course was, as we have seen, warmly applauded by the Department at home, it proved quite distasteful to many unthinking and reckless men who, regardless of the honor of their country, eagerly desired to precipitate a war with Spain.

The *Saranac* had been fitted out for service in the East Indies, and her detention upon this mission caused a change in her destination. Upon her return to the waters of the United States she was designated as the flag-ship

of Commodore Parker. While she bore the Commodore's flag Captain Tattnell made a short cruise in her; but, at his own request, was soon relieved, and, on the first of July, 1851, was ordered to the general command of the naval station at Pensacola, Florida.

While there, the yellow fever appeared in most violent and malignant form, causing a total suspension of work in the dock-yard and creating a general panic. The disease amounted to a plague, and was more fatal than any visitation of like character which had been previously known. Captain Tattnell was very ill with the fever, and, at one time, was thought to be in a dying condition. In fact, his demise was reported; and obituary notices, highly eulogistic of his private character, official worth, and public services, were published in the daily journals of his native city and elsewhere.

During the continuance of this command, his official action in scrutinizing the accounts of contractors and defeating the schemes of parties who were attempting to impose upon the Government provoked the resentment of certain individuals. He was threatened with violence if found beyond the area of his immediate command. This was quite sufficient to ensure his going out as often as practicable. On such occasions he invariably dismissed his orderlies from personal attendance upon him, and refused to carry any weapon other than a heavy stick. This, in his hands, was a powerful instrument of defense. To all remonstrances against exposing himself alone and without a pistol, he replied: "I have a good conscience and a good stick." Thus he went his way unattended and unattacked.

On the first of September, 1854, Captain Tattnell was

ordered to the command of the frigate *Independence*, then fitting out in New York as the flag-ship for the Pacific station. Her preparation reflected much discredit upon the officer of equipment; but the urgency of the Navy Department in getting this ship to sea prevented the development of many defects which were subsequently discovered between the ports of New York and Rio de Janeiro. Although the *Independence* had been turned over to Captain Tattnall by the Navy Yard officials as fit for a voyage round the world and furnished for an absence of three years from the States, her main cap was found so defective that it was condemned by survey, and the main and fore yards were so decayed that they could not be trusted for a passage round Cape Horn. These were also condemned. To prevent delay in reaching the Pacific, Tattnall shifted all the yards of the foremast to the mainmast, and substituted a main topsail for a fore-yard. In this jury rig the voyage to Valparaiso was accomplished. The services of the *Independence* while on the Pacific station were of the character customary in times of peace.

At Valparaiso, shortly after the arrival of his ship upon her station, Captain Tattnall, while walking, late at night, from the hotel to his barge at the landing, was suddenly, although politely, stopped in a then unfrequented part of the city by a fine looking man whose dress and manner were unexceptionable. The stranger said: "I wish to thank you, Captain Tattnall, for your great service to me years ago. You appear to have forgotten me and the service you then did me. The latter is as graceful and natural for you to forget as it is for me to remember. I desire to pass unrecognized here, but to you I will recall

a name of the past," and, mentioning his name, turned off with a graceful bow. Captain Tattnall spoke of the meeting to his son, but did not divulge either the name of the individual or the nature of the service rendered.

While the *Independence* was upon a visit to San Francisco in 1855, so frequent and bold were the desertions, that the most prompt and rigid measures were requisite to prevent the entire disorganization of the ship's crew. Tattnall communicated the facts to the Commodore,—William Mervine,—and with his sanction adopted such methods as in his judgment were best calculated to correct the evil. The Commodore subsequently exhibited a lack of moral nerve in carrying out the line of coercion, of which he had been fully advised and which he had emphatically approved, and turned upon Captain Tattnall with words of condemnation. Such conduct Tattnall never allowed from any quarter, however prominent in rank, and he at once put upon record, in official form, his impression of the Commodore's vacillating course,—a course which would not have given him a moment's serious thought had the Commodore not attempted to shield himself, behind a junior officer, from the consequences of what he believed might prove a troublesome exhibition of vigorous administration, and against which certain fault-finders at Washington might enter their protests. So incensed was the Commodore that he placed Captain Tattnall under arrest, and sent him to the United States under charges. Upon considering the matter, the Navy Department refused to bring him to trial upon the charges preferred by Commodore Mervine, and summarily dismissed them.

On the thirtieth of May, 1856, he was ordered to the command of the naval station on the Lakes, with his head-

quarters at Sackett's Harbor, on Lake Ontario. There he remained until the 15th of October, 1857, when he was directed to proceed by the overland route to the East Indies and assume command of the naval forces in the East India and China seas, with the rank of Flag-Officer. This was the first step taken in the American Navy toward the establishment of the permanent grade of Admiral.

The critical status of the relations of the great maritime powers with the Empires of China and Japan rendered it imperative that the United States Government should select as the commander of its naval forces in the India and China seas an officer of the highest capacity, one of enlarged experience, in whom prudence and prompt action were happily blended, and who could, by counsel and deed, cooperate with the distinguished gentlemen charged with the inauguration of advantageous commercial treaties with those distant and unique peoples. In those waters were then present prominent representatives of European Governments intent upon a similar mission. The honor, the intelligence, the dignity, and the manhood of the United States were emphatically at stake in this congress of nations, and the selection of Tattnall to bear the Stars and Stripes at this juncture was at once a recognition of his deserts and a mark of confidence most pronounced. Never was trust better placed. Among the names of the actors in the eventful scenes which there transpired, none is more bravely and honorably remembered than that of Rear Flag-Officer Josiah Tattnall.

Arrived at his station he hoisted his broad pendant at the main-royal masthead of the United States steamer *San Jacinto*. Upon the arrival of the *Powhatan*, however, in May, 1858, he transferred his flag to that ship. A salute of

thirteen guns was fired by the *San Jacinto*, as a farewell compliment, and this was responded to by a similar salute from his new flag-ship.

This occurred at Hong Kong. On the 21st of May, at daylight, the *Powhatan* was under way for the Gulf of Pecheelee. As the course to that gulf lay within a few miles of the entrance to the Woosung river, Commodore Tattnall determined to visit Shanghai, hoping to receive definite intelligence from the scene of the recent warlike operations of the French and English at the mouth of Pei-ho river, of which vague accounts had reached him before leaving Hong Kong. While at anchor near the "Saddle islands," sixty miles from Woosung, he fell in with the *Mississippi*, and learned from her officers that the American Minister, "the Hon. William B. Read, had nearly concluded a treaty of amity and commerce with the Chinese Commissioners at Tientsin, when the destruction of the forts at the mouth of the Pei-ho by the beligerent allies quashed the whole business, and rendered it necessary for him to await the result of their less pacific mode of negotiation."

Having remained at Shanghai until the first of June, whither he had proceeded in his barge,—leaving the *Powhatan* at Woosung,—to collect all the information he could secure relating to the state of affairs in the Gulf of Pecheelee, he returned to the ship which left the muddy waters of the Woosung the next morning en route for the gulf. In the language of the Executive Officer of the *Powhatan*,—Lieutenant James D. Johnston,—Commodore Tattnall's "patriotic and professional pride revolted at the idea of appearing among the large number of English and French men-of-war anchored off the mouth

of the Pei-ho, in the character of a passive spectator,—or ‘jackall to the British lion’—with which opprobrious epithet, among others, the press in China had stigmatized the position assumed by the Government of the United States in its diplomatic intercourse with the Chinese. But there was no alternative. The stern commands of duty had to be obeyed at every sacrifice of personal feeling, and no time was lost in continuing our voyage to the scene of action.”\*

Nearly a month was passed in the Gulf of Pecheelee in exchange of courtesies and watching the progress of events rendered exceedingly tardy and uncertain by obstinate mandarins.

Mr. Read having determined to proceed to Shanghai in the *Minnesota*, that she might replenish her supplies, and thence sail for Japan, Commodore Tattnall, on the afternoon of the 5th of July, steamed for the beautiful bay of Nagasaki. A pleasant passage of nearly four days, and then the *Powhatan* found anchorage at her port of destination. Of the interchange of hospitalities, and the pleasures experienced at this point, Lieutenant Johnston has left a happy record, but the limits of this sketch do not permit us to reproduce his interesting narrative. From Nagasaki the Commodore proceeded to Simoda, and thence to the bay of Yedo, where, on the 29th of July, 1858, a treaty of amity and commerce was concluded between the United States and the Empire of Japan.

This important matter having been pleasantly and advantageously accomplished, the *Powhatan* returned to Shanghai, whence the Commodore sent a bearer of dispatches to the United States, conveying to the State De-

\* China and Japan, &c., p. 86. Philadelphia, 1860.



partment a copy of the important treaty which had just been concluded with the Japanese Government. One of the stipulations of that treaty provided that a Japanese Embassy should visit the United States to exchange its ratification at Washington. Voluntarily, and upon his own responsibility as Commander-in-Chief of the naval forces in China and Japan, Commodore Tattnall placed at the disposal of the members of that Embassy, through Mr. Harris, one of the vessels under his command to convey them to Panama or to Washington, as they might prefer.

The cholera being prevalent at Shanghai, the Commodore left that port on the 6th of September for the beautiful bay of Nagasaki, which was reached on the 10th. While at Shanghai he had exchanged courtesies of the most generous character with the Taou-tai, or Governor of the city. He omitted no opportunity, during his command in these seas, to conciliate the native rulers and impress them with an exalted conception of the dignity and hospitality of the American officer.

While at anchor at Nagasaki the soldiers and sailors constituting the crew of the *Powhatan* were carefully instructed and drilled in the various exercises which contributed to the efficiency of the ship as a man-of-war. The active service hitherto performed had, to a certain extent, precluded that attention to a portion of these exercises which was universally desired by the officers. This routine of duties was happily supplemented by periodical recreation, which proved interesting and instructive. During this visit the official announcement of the death of the Tycoon caused a great sensation among the natives. Having established most cordial relations with the Japanese officials, and with the commanders of the Russian and French men-of-war newly ar-

rived in the harbor, being anxious to send dispatches to the United States, and having grown somewhat restless during this period of inactivity, the Commodore determined to return to Shanghai, for which place the *Powhatan* sailed on the 31st of October. The anchorage near Woosung was reached three days afterwards. Finding that the presence of the *Powhatan* was not here required, the ship sailed on the 7th of November for Hong Kong, which was made in less than four days. There some two weeks were consumed in holding a court martial for the trial of some officers and men of the *Mississippi*. This business concluded, the Commodore sailed for Whampoa, at which place the *Powhatan* anchored on the 11th of December.

## CHAPTER EIGHTH.

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Receives the United States Minister,—the Hon. John E. Ward,—on board the *Powhatan* at Penang. Return to Hong Kong. Minister Ward. Off the mouth of the Pei-ho river. Lieutenant Johnston's account of the affair of the Pei-ho. Flag-Officer Tattnall's report to the Secretary of the Navy. Official correspondence.

Having received a letter from the Department expressing its appreciation of the services he had rendered Mr. Harris in consummating the treaty with Japan, and sanctioning his offer of a vessel to convey the Embassy either to Panama or to the United States as its members might prefer, Commodore Tattnall was on the eve of leaving Hong Kong for Japan that he might facilitate the departure of the Japanese Commissioners, when he received an order from the Navy Department directing the *Powhatan* to proceed without delay to Signapore and there await the arrival of the Hon. John E. Ward,—the newly appointed Minister to China,—who was to be conveyed in that ship to his destination.

Having dispatched the *Germantown* to communicate with the *Mississippi*, which had been placed at the disposal of the Japanese Embassy, Commodore Tattnall proceeded in the execution of this order, and in the *Powhatan* reached Singapore in less than six days. The interval between arrival at this port and the coming of the Minister,—who had been delayed in his movements,—was improved and beguiled by a brief visit to Malacca and Penang. The sojourn of the Commodore at this latter place was rendered

most enjoyable by the distinguished hospitalities extended, and marks of respect shown him.

On the 28th of April a steamer arrived at Penang with the American flag flying at the fore in compliment to the presence on board of his Excellency John E. Ward, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to China. A salute of seventeen guns was fired, and the meeting between the Minister and the Commodore was most cordial. Georgians both, and personal friends, most happy was the renewal on the instant of their former acquaintance. Their association was on all occasions confidential, intimate, and most agreeable.

The broad pendant so long worn by commanders of squadrons in the United States navy at the main-royal mast-head had been, some months before, in obedience to an order from the Navy Department, hauled down, and in its stead was hoisted at the mizen a square blue flag in token of the new title of *Flag-officer*, virtually proclaiming the position and authority of an Admiral. Delaying his departure for a few days that the Minister, and officers of the ship might partake of some final and marked hospitalities extended by the principal citizens of Penang, whose courtesy and generosity had known no bounds, the Commodore sailed on the 1st of May with the Minister on board. Passing Singapore without stopping, Hong Kong was reached on the 10th, where Mr. Ward was for several days busily engaged in receiving and returning visits from all the foreign, diplomatic, and naval dignitaries in the city and harbor. The usual noisy testimonials of respect were exchanged on each occasion,—the *Powhatan* answering all salutes to her honored guest.

“The passage to Hong Kong,” writes Lieutenant John-

ston,\* “was marked by nothing of material interest, apart from the pleasure we derived from the society of our distinguished passengers, for whom a universal feeling of respect and friendly regard was entertained by the officers of the ship. Mr. Ward was considered a fine specimen of a Southern gentleman, and a better representative of the diplomatic corps of our country than is ordinarily appointed to any other than a first-class European mission.

“The unsettled condition of the relations between China and the great commercial nations of the earth rendered it particularly desirable that our country should be represented, at this time, by a man of great ability and political acumen, and there is no doubt that Mr. Ward was admirably well calculated to sustain the dignity and honor, as well as the commercial interests of his country, in any emergency that might arise.”

The *Powhatan* was speedily put in condition for a six months' absence from this, the only depot for provisions on the station; and on the 16th of May, the English steamer *Toey-wan*, of 175 tons burthen, was chartered by the Flag-officer for a period of five months, and equipped for service as “tender to the ship for the purpose of conveying the Minister and his suite from the mouth of the Pei-ho to Tientsin, to which point there was no doubt entertained of his being allowed to ascend.”

On the morning of the 18th,—the Minister and suite on board and the *Toey-wan* in tow,—the *Powhatan* proceeded to sea on the long northern cruise for which she was thoroughly prepared.

Touching at Ningpo to take on board the Reverend Wm. A. P. Martin, whose knowledge of the Mandarin dialect,—

\* China and Japan, &c., p. 211. Philadelphia, 1860.

which is altogether used in diplomatic intercourse with Chinese officials,—rendered his services indispensable to Mr. Ward, the Commodore pursued his voyage to Woosung, whence the American Minister paid an official visit to the Imperial Commissioners, *Kweiliang* and *Hwashana*, with whom he desired to have an interview in reference to the ratification of the treaty negotiated by Mr. Reed in June, 1858.

The time having arrived for the presence of Mr. Ward at the point agreed upon for the ratification of the treaty, he returned with his suite to the *Powhatan* on the 17th of June, and preparations were made for immediate departure. The anchorage off the mouth of the Pei-ho was reached early on the morning of the 21st.

The allied fleet there assembled consisted of twenty-one steamers of various sizes. On board the greatest activity apparently prevailed as if in anticipation of important events; for it had been ascertained that the Chinese “had rebuilt the fortifications destroyed the year previous, and placed additional obstructions across the entrance of the river which they obstinately refused to remove to permit the foreign envoys to pass to Tientsin.”

The details of this memorable affair of the Pei-ho we present as they were penned by Lieutenant Johnston, executive officer of the *Powhatan*, and an eye witness of the events as they transpired:

“The English Admiral’s demands to this effect, were met with the impudent duplicity for which the natives of the ‘middle kingdom’ are so distinguished; the gigantic coolie, who received all communications addressed to the forts, declaring that they were defended only by a few volunteer braves, stationed there to destroy pirates and resist any

attempt of the rebels to advance upon Peking by that route ; stating also that his orders were to fire upon any man-of-war that might endeavor to pass the barriers or booms.

“The bar, or rather extended flat, which has been formed by the accumulated deposit caused by the strong tides of the river, and reaches about five miles outside of its entrance, precluded the possibility of anchoring the larger vessels within that distance of the forts, and even the gun-boats and tenders were compelled to await a favorable tide to cross this plateau, upon which the depth of water never exceeded ten feet. On the 24th, Admiral Hope, in the tender *Coromandel*, the French Commodore in the *Norzagaray*, and Flag-officer Tattnell in the *Toey-wan*, the latter having also on board Mr. Ward and suite, with Captain Pearson, of the *Powhatan*, and Captain Taylor, of the marine guard of the same ship, crossed this bar, accompanied by thirteen gun-boats, all of which anchored in the mouth of the river.

“The *Toey-wan* grounded immediately under the guns of the forts, and as soon as her situation was made known to Admiral Hope, he dispatched the gun-boat *Plover* to tow her off ; but the chain used for this purpose having parted, the attempt to extricate her from the ticklish position into which she had fallen was relinquished, and she remained stationary until sunset, when the tide floated her off ; previous to which, however, the Admiral offered the entire use of one of his gun-boats to Flag-officer Tattnell, requesting him to hoist his flag on board, and retain her as long as he desired. This magnanimous proposition was, of course, declined, although the generous feeling which prompted it was very highly appreciated. Meanwhile the Flag-officer sent his barge with the Rev. Mr. Martin

and four others, to ascertain, if possible, the chances of obtaining a passage up the river for this little steamer with her passengers; but they were met by the same brawny representative of the Emperor who had received the English Admiral's communications, and the same evasive replies returned to the inquiries. He condescended, however, to inform the interpreter that orders had been issued by his august Master to the Governor-General of the province, *Hangfuh* by name, to make arrangements for conducting the foreign Ministers to Peking from the town of Pehtang, situated a few miles north of the Pei-ho, on the coast. He declined, though, to send the Minister's card to the Governor-General, to furnish conveyance for a messenger, or a pilot to guide the steamer to the mouth of the river upon whose banks this hitherto unheard-of town was built. No information could be elicited from this obliging subordinate, respecting the force within the forts, a matter of some curiosity to us, and of vital consequence to the menacing Allies; but the gracious assurance was vouchsafed that no harm would be done to the *Toey-wan*, unless she attempted to remove the booms, which was not very likely under the circumstances.

“The Flag-officer communicated the result of this interview to the English Admiral, but as he had already determined to comply with Mr. Bruce's request to open a passage to Tientsin for him, *via* the Pei-ho, the information came too late to be of any service, although it might have been, if the English Minister would have consented to pursue the new route indicated. The absence of the usual Chinese display of flags and men on the walls of their forts in the presence of an enemy, and the greater part of the port-holes being covered with mats, no doubt, deceived the



Admiral into the belief that they were not very strongly defended; but, at all events, he was bound to make the attempt to force a passage up the river, and as the day was near at hand when the Minister should be in Peking (the 27th), he ordered one of the gun-boats to commence the removal of the stakes composing the first barrier, on the night succeeding the interview referred to. A single gun was fired from one of the forts at the vessel employed in this work, but she persevered until an opening was made sufficiently wide to admit of her passage.

“On the morning of the 25th, the gun-boats were arranged in order of battle, preparatory to attacking the forts; and just as the Admiral had completed his preparations, a boat was seen coming from the shore containing a Chinese official, who held in his hand a large document, which he displayed in such manner as to attract the Admiral’s attention, but he directed the bearer to be warned off, saying that it was too late for negotiation. At a quarter before three o’clock in the afternoon the Admiral advanced in the gun-boat *Plover* through the first barrier, and ran full speed against the second, the vessel rebounding considerably with the shock; at this moment the forts on each side of the river opened a terrific fire upon the assembled vessels—the first shot taking off the head of one of the men at the bow gun, and mortally wounding three others. The fire was instantly returned, and kept up with unwavering skill and undaunted courage for nearly three hours, although the shot from seven different forts were falling among them with the most deadly effect, and producing a scene of carnage and destruction almost without a parallel in naval warfare. The receding tide conspired with the overwhelming superiority of the Chinese force, to destroy

or render useless the staunch and dauntless little gun-boats, leaving two of them aground in such positions as to render it impossible for them to do any execution with their batteries, while two others were sunk at their anchors, and still two more forced to withdraw from the action in a sinking condition, and seek the poor refuge afforded by the adjacent flats, where their injuries could be repaired during low tide. At about 5 P. M., a young midshipman came on board the *Toey-wan* from a neighboring gun-boat to inform Flag-officer Tattnell that the English Admiral had transferred his flag to the *Cormorant* dispatch-boat, and had been seriously wounded. While standing on the 'bridge' (a light platform raised five or six feet above the deck and extending across the vessel,) a shot came from one of the forts, and striking the chain 'life-line' extended along its edges, drove three links into his thigh, causing him to fall heavily upon the deck below, by which three of his ribs were broken. In addition to this, there were but six men remaining on duty on board the *Plover*, out of a crew of thirty-seven, and as the little Middy informed the Flag-officer of these disasters, he looked wistfully toward a number of large boats anchored below the line of fire, and stated that the Admiral was extremely anxious to bring into action the reinforcements which they contained. As the strength of the tide rendered it impossible to effect this object without the assistance of a steamer, and the *Toey-wan* was anchored near these boats, Flag-officer Tattnell yielded to the generous and noble impulse which prompted him to render this unsolicited service to the gallant Admiral, toward whom he felt under obligations for the prompt and handsome manner in which he had, the day previous, proffered him the use of one of his vessels. The suggestion was made

to him that the step he contemplated would involve a violation of the neutral position occupied by his country in the belligerent turn which affairs had taken, but he replied, 'blood is thicker than water,' and ordered the *Toey-wan* to be got under way immediately, and to proceed to tow the reserve force in the boats up to the point where their presence was so much needed—Mr. Ward and Captain Pearson expressing their approbation of the Flag-officer's determination.

"At twenty minutes before 8 P. M., a storming party of six hundred men, under the command of the senior Captain of the fleet, landed on the muddy bank of the river, immediately abreast of one of the forts, which was not more than four hundred yards distant. Many of these men were shot down in the mud before reaching the dry ground, and here they encountered three wide ditches, two of which were filled with water, and the third with large iron spikes, over which it seemed impossible to pass alive. While endeavoring to overcome these apparently insurmountable obstacles, the Chinese sharpshooters which lined the walls of the fort, were throwing up fire-balls so profusely as to illumine the entire ground in front, and firing upon their assailants with such deadly effect that but few succeeded in reaching the walls of the fort, although most gallantly cheered onward by their commanding officer. More than one-third of their number were either drowned in the ditches or killed by the destructive fire of the enemy; and it was two o'clock in the morning before the survivors of this desperate attack found their way back to their vessels, the command having finally devolved upon the officer who was the third in rank at the time of landing.

"After the *Toey-wan* had towed the first detachment of

the reserve force into action, Flag-officer Tattnall felt in honor bound to call upon the English Admiral, and offer his personal sympathy and assistance. Without giving a thought, therefore, to the imminent hazard to which he would expose his own life, and consulting only his duty as a man, and the honor of the profession of which he has always been regarded as an ornament, he ordered his barge to be manned, and accompanied by his Flag-lieutenant, S. D. Trenchard, pulled alongside of the *Cormorant*, through the midst of the tremendous fire which the forts still continued to pour into that devoted vessel; the Chinamen recognizing the Admiral's flag at her mast-head. Just as the barge came within a few feet of the side-ladder, a shot struck one of the oars, and entering the boat, passed through her bottom on the opposite side, coming within a few inches of the Flag-officer, and finding its exit between the legs of his Flag-lieutenant, as he sat in the 'stern-sheets.' Fortunately they were close enough to the gangway to reach the ladder before the boat sunk, and they were soon on the deck of the steamer, not, however, without a more serious misfortune than the sinking of the boat—the Coxswain having received a mortal wound on the side of his head, inflicted, it was supposed, by a splinter from the oar that had been shattered by the shot. He was taken on board the steamer, and immediately afterward conveyed to the hospital vessel, where he died in a few hours, without having spoken from the moment the singular catastrophe occurred. His name was John Hart, and a finer specimen of a seamen is seldom met with. The Flag-officer was exceedingly grieved at his loss, as he regarded him with a feeling of personal attachment, growing out of his long and faithful services. Commodore Tattnall returned to the *Toey-wan* in a boat fur-

nished by the commander of the *Cormorant*. While the boat's crew were detained on the deck of the *Cormorant*, they observed that one of the guns was very short of men to work it, and several of them immediately stepped forward unsolicited, and rendered all the assistance in their power during the few minutes they remained on board.

“The allied forces were occupied during the whole night, after these painful and thrilling events, in endeavoring to recover their scattered boats and men, and to preserve as much of the property on board their sunken vessels as could possibly be recovered, and this in spite of the unceasing fire kept up by the victorious enemy, the boom of whose heavy guns was frequently heard breaking the still gloom of the night, and giving fatal utterance to his foul and cruel treachery.

“Early on the following morning the *Toey-wan* returned to her anchorage, near the *Powhatan*, bringing out a large number of the marines who had been engaged in the battle, and also the body of John Hart, which was buried about a mile from the ship with appropriate ceremonies. As soon as the Minister and other passengers on board the tender were transferred to the ship, I was directed by the Flag-officer to assume temporary command of that vessel, and repair on board the English tender at anchor outside the bar, for the purpose of offering any further services the *Toey-wan* might be capable of rendering, apart from actual engagement in battle. The Admiral seemed to be highly gratified by this unexpected attention, and requested that I would proceed to the mouth of the river and report the object of my visit to Captain Willes, the Captain of the Flag-ship. Availing of a favorable tide, I crossed the bar, and anchored near the large dispatch vessel *Nimrod*, which was

just outside the ordinary line of fire, though occasionally reached by a shot from one of the heavier guns. The next morning Captain Willes came on board and took breakfast with me, assuring me it was the first meal he had tasted for thirty-six hours. He requested me to remain until 10 P. M., at which time the tide would serve to cross the bar, and convey to the transport *Assistance*, at anchor outside, a portion of the marine force which had found temporary shelter on board the junks, seized for this purpose by the Admiral's orders, previous to the bombardment. This request was cheerfully complied with, and the service performed; after which I returned to the *Powhatan* at 2 A. M. on the 28th, with the thanks of the Admiral, and the assurance that the *Toey-wan's* assistance was no longer required, as two of the sunken gun-boats had been raised, and nearly all the men had returned to their respective vessels.

“While lying at anchor in the entrance of the river, I had a good opportunity of observing the defenses constructed by the Chinese during the year which had elapsed since their total demolition by the allied squadrons, under Admirals Seymour and De Genouilly, with a force of two thousand five hundred men; and whatever may be said of the ignorance and cowardice of the race, there can be no question of their industry, or of the adequacy of the works they had thrown up, to resist almost any force that could be assembled in the entrance of the narrow river, for the purpose of forcing its passage. There were no less than seven different forts, mounting eighty-seven guns that could be seen through the embrasures, and among them there were several throwing solid shot as large as our 8-inch shells;—how many there were that could not be seen, will never be

positively ascertained, I imagine, as the Chinese are not *particularly* communicative on such subjects to foreigners. The obstructions placed across the river extended from a point about a quarter of a mile outside of the two forts immediately at its mouth, a distance of three miles or more beyond their inner walls, two lines of abattis forming the outer barriers, above which there were two booms constructed of large logs of timber secured together by heavy chains, and stretched endwise across the stream at convenient points; constituting, altogether, about as formidable an obstacle to *progress* as could readily be conceived, even by those cunning and persistent enemies to the moving spirit of the age in which we live. In addition to this, the mud flats, which were left bare at low water, extended a hundred yards or more from the channel, on each bank of the river; and they were sown broadcast with caltrops, rendering the passage between the channel and the forts sufficiently hazardous, even to those who might have the strength to stagger through the sticky mud, and the skill to dodge the fire of the jingalls and Minié rifles, poured upon them from the parapet walls.

“The beautiful dispatch-vessel *Cormorant*, which had figured so conspicuously in the capture of these forts the year previous, now laid with her stern hard aground within three hundred yards of one of the largest forts; and the Chinese evidently regarded her as having been fairly ‘*bagged*,’ giving her only an occasional shot by way of testing the accuracy of their fire, which was by no means remarkable during the twelve hours I watched their proceedings. She had been left to her fate the night previous on account of the dreadful havoc made among her crew, and the impossibility of bringing her guns to bear; but an effort was made

the night afterwards to float her off upon the flood tide, which would doubtless have succeeded, but for the unfortunate misunderstanding of an order given to the Engineer, who started the engine to 'back,' instead of 'ahead,' as directed; by which means the propeller got so embedded in the mud as to be immovable. But the vessel had changed her position, so as to present her full broadside to the fort; and as soon as it was discovered that she could not be started, it became necessary to blow off the steam which had been raised. The sound of the escaping steam awakened the attention of the unwary gunners in the fort, and they soon sent such a shower of shot at the devoted vessel, that the officers and men who had undertaken the daring attempt to recover her from the enemy, were compelled again to abandon the unlucky craft to the inevitable destruction which now awaited her. They embarked quietly in their boats on the least exposed side of the vessel; and, all starting together, made one of the most exciting regattas I have ever witnessed—shot flying around them, and over them, at every stroke of the oars; often drenching the crews with the muddy spray sent up by plunging into the water near them, and yet all escaped uninjured to their vessels.

“The *Lee* and *Plover* were locked in the last fond embrace of dying love, with their graceful forms resting upon the inhospitable shore, near one of the forts, from whence the vengeful foe continued to project destructive missiles through their unresisting frames. The *Kestrel* sought refuge at the bottom of the turbid stream from the iron hail-storm which raged above; but, soon becoming dissatisfied with the change, she raised herself sufficiently from the superincumbent element to glide smoothly and quietly down the tide, until she reached a point where her astonished and



grateful friends could with safety send a crew on board to conduct her to a more comfortable position. This vessel was sunk early in the action, quite near to the second barrier, and during the day I remained at anchor in the mouth of the river, her hull was totally invisible; but in the course of the following night, she was raised from the bottom by some unaccountable cause, and drifting down near to the *Nimrod*, a crew was sent on board from that vessel to anchor her on the flats, where her injuries were soon repaired. I leave the explanation of this philosophical phenomenon to the *savans* of the country, and have only to request a due acknowledgment of the favor conferred upon them by furnishing so interesting a case for their deliberation and investigation.

“The allied force consisted of one thousand three hundred and fifty men (of whom only about sixty were French); and the loss of the English amounted to four hundred and fifty killed and wounded, twenty-nine of the number being officers; the French had four killed and twelve wounded. The Admiral and the three senior Captains were all seriously injured, one of the latter dying shortly afterward of his wounds.

“The excitement on board the *Powhatan* during the bombardment was so intense that the tops and masts were lined with eager gazers, and as I had been directed to have two hundred men prepared to land at a moment’s notice, I ordered the heavy launches to be got ready for hoisting out for that purpose. The work was performed in less time than it ever had been before, though it proved to be unnecessary.”

The following is Flag-officer Tattnell’s report to the Secre-

tary of the Navy. Like all the official documents submitted by him, it is a model of its kind :

“UNITED STATES STEAM FRIGATE POWHATAN,  
 “FLAG SHIP EAST INDIA SQUADRON,  
 “OFF PEI-HO RIVER, July 4, 1859.

“SIR: The last dispatch which I had the honor to send you reported this ship, in company with the chartered steamer *Toey-wan*, at sea, off the Yangtee, on her way to the Pei-ho, with our Minister to China,—Mr. Ward,—and suite on board.

“That gentleman has reported to the government the result of his interviews and correspondence with the Chinese Commissioners at Shanghai. I only refer, therefore, to that subject as far as necessary to your understanding the circumstances which placed us in a very unexpected position on our arrival at the Pei-ho and produced as unexpected results.

“The Chinese Commissioners were those with whom our late Commissioner,—Mr. Reed,—concluded the treaty last year at Tientsin, and with whom he subsequently arranged the tariff at Shanghai, where they have remained ever since.

“In the interchange of visits between these Commissioners and Mr. Ward, the latter was escorted by a number of the officers and sixty marines of our squadron; this being not only suited to the dignity of Mr. Ward, but intended as a compliment to the Chinese Commissioners, to whom Mr. Ward wished to extend the greatest consideration.

“Mr. Ward informed them that he was on his way to Peking to exchange the treaties, which it was obligatory on both parties to do on or before the 18th of June, now near at hand.

“They replied that, having signed the treaties, they must themselves exchange them; that they could not reach Peking from Shanghai in less than sixty days; and that by agreement with Lord Elgin, the late British Opposition, they were expected to remain at Shanghai until the arrival of the present British Minister,—Mr. Bruce.

“Mr. Ward then offered to exchange our treaty at Shanghai, which they evaded on the ground that the treaty was at Peking, and they proposed to Mr. Ward that he should remain at Shanghai until the arrival of the British Minister.

“Mr. Ward, although doubting their sincerity, in a spirit of consideration and forbearance accepted the proposition, thus waiving the specified time of exchange.

“The British Minister, on his arrival a day or two after, refused to hold official intercourse with the Commissioners, on the ground (as I understood it) that Peking was the place specified in the British treaty for the exchange, and that he was on his way there for that purpose.

“Unsuccessful in their endeavor to detain the British, and to re-open the negotiation at Shanghai, the Commissioners apparently yielded, and dispatched couriers (who they asserted would arrive in a week) to Peking to prepare (as they said) the authorities for the arrival and reception of all the Ministers, and their conveyance to Peking, where the treaties would be exchanged by a special Commissioner on the 25th June, the day specified in the British treaty.

“The Commissioners notified Mr. Ward of this arrangement, and requested him to accompany the British and French to the Pei-ho. To this he consented, thereby to a certain extent assuming the same platform with the latter.

“I will here remark that the sincerity of the Commissioners was much doubted at the time, some of their coun-

trymen at Shanghai declaring that delay was their object, as they were fortifying the Pei-ho very strongly, and had placed in command a Mongul Prince of high military reputation, who was known to be very hostile to the 'treaties.'

"We reached the anchorage off the Pei-ho on the 21st of June, where we found the British and French Ministers and their fleets.

"On my first interview with the British Admiral,—James Hope,—I learned that the Ministers (English and French) had announced to the authorities on shore the object of their visit, and that they should proceed by the river to Tientsin, on their way to Peking, conformably with their 'treaties.'

"The Chinese had positively refused them the ascent of the river, the entrance to which they found very strongly fortified, and across which several lines of barricades had been constructed.

"The Chinese declared that this river, which we had all navigated as the Pei-ho a year ago, was only one mouth of the Tientsin river, and that there was another entrance ten miles to the north, which entrance was called the Pei-ho, and was the point referred to in the treaties.

"They insisted that the Ministers should remain off this northern entrance until the arrival of the Commissioners from Shanghai, (which could not be short of two months,) when arrangements would be made to convey them to Peking by this route.

"The British and French Ministers, considering this an evasion with a view to gaining time to strengthen their defenses, had referred the matter to their respective naval commanders, who notified the Chinese that if the obstructions in the channel of the river were not removed by the

25th June, the day for the exchange of treaties, they would themselves proceed to remove them.

“I will here remark that in the Chinese charts there is a small river emptying into the sea ten miles to the north of this, and which, diverging gradually from the course of the Pei-ho as you ascend it, has its source far in the interior. Some twenty miles from its mouth it is connected with the river we know as the Pei-ho by a narrow creek, said to be dry at low, and having but five feet at high water.

“After due deliberation Mr. Ward and I decided to enter the river we had known as the Pei-ho, in the steamer *Toey-wan* as far as the barricades, as though ignorant of access having been refused the English and French. If the forts should fire across our bows to bring us to we would anchor and communicate; if into us, having no guns, we would retire and act accordingly.

“Twelve British and one French steamer, all small, had previously concentrated within the bar, at the mouth of the river, just out of gun shot of the batteries.

“We entered the river in execution of our plan at 11 A. M. on the 24th ultimo, and passing through the British squadron, without communicating, pushed up towards the barriers.

“At this time not a man was to be seen at the forts nor a gun in an embrasure, nor, although flag-staffs were on the parapets, was a flag displayed. There was nothing to indicate that the forts were armed or manned.

“Subsequently events show this to have been a deception and ambushade, intended, I do not doubt, (in the confidence of their own strength and the small force of the English,) to invite a conflict in order to annul the treaties of last year.

“We had approached to within three hundred yards of the first barrier, at which point, should we not be fired on,

I had proposed anchoring, when we grounded, and failed in all our efforts to back off. The tide was falling fast, and our situation was critical, not only from the facility with which the batteries might demolish us, but, as we were on the edge of a steep bank, from the probability of the steamer falling over and filling.

“At this moment I received from Admiral James Hope an attention and kindness which must place me under lasting obligations to him.

“Although he had reason to think that she would be fired upon by the forts, he sent a gun-boat to my aid, with the message that had he known of my intention to pass up he would have furnished me a pilot, and that he expected to see me fired on.

“The gun-boat failed in her efforts to extricate me, and there being, as I have said, a probability of the *Toey-wan's* falling over and filling, the Admiral dispatched a second gun-boat to me, placing her entirely at my disposition, with the handsome and generous offer that I should hoist on board of her the American ensign and my own personal flag.

“I declined the offer, with a just appreciation, however, of the personal kindness to myself and the delicate compliment to our service.

“The *Toey-wan* was more fortunate than I expected, and, a favorable wind having sprung up, we got her off at high water.

“About two hours after grounding we sent a boat to the nearest fort, with my Flag-lieutenant,—Mr. Trenchard,—and the interpreters, to inform the commanding officer that the American Minister was on board the *Toey-wan* on his way to Tientsin and Peking, in accordance with our treaty and

an understanding with the Chinese Commissioners at Shanghai.

“They were met at the landing by an officer professing to be of low rank, who said that his orders were not to permit the removal of the barriers, and to fire on those attempting it; that he believed that a high officer had been appointed to meet the Ministers at the north. He also asserted most falsely, as subsequently shown, that there were no troops and only a few country militia in the forts.

“Although the interpreters were allowed to get out of the boat for greater facility of conversation, they were not permitted to approach the forts.

“The *Toey-wan* floated late in the evening, when I observed that the British were arranging themselves, apparently, for action. I therefore dropped down to the mouth of the harbor, and below them, so that my lights might not interfere with their signals, or my position with their operations. .

“The British in the night removed with their boats a portion of the lower barrier, but the Chinese restored it in the morning.

“At 2:45 p. m. on the 25th, the day specified for the exchange of treaties, the British stood up the river for the barriers, Admiral Hope leading in one of the gun-boats.

“This whole force consisted of ten gun-boats, including one French, and three larger steamers of a class denominated dispatch vessels, carrying in all about fifty guns. They also had on board of some Chinese junks, at the mouth of the river, a reserve of boats with seamen and marines.

“On the Admiral’s reaching the first barrier the forts suddenly swarmed with men, and a terrible fire from very

heavy guns was opened on him from all the forts on both sides of the river.

“Two of his vessels at this moment grounded near the spot the *Toey-wan* had grounded the day before.

“The British and French fought with the most determined valor, but fifteen minutes sufficed to show me without a hope of success.

“The fire of the Chinese was directed with fatal skill, and was chiefly concentrated on the Admiral and the vessel nearest to him. His flag vessel being disabled and her crew cut up, he shifted his flag to a second, and on her meeting the fate of the first, he again shifted it to the *Cormorant*, one of the larger (dispatch) steamers. Here again the fire was concentrated on the flag of the gallant Admiral.

“By this time, 4 P. M., several of his vessels had been sunk, and it was evident to me that nothing could enable him to extricate himself and retire from the hopeless conflict but the reserve of boats and men at the junks, but at the time the tide was running too strong for the crowded boats to stem.

“The officer in charge of these boats now visited me. He said nothing of aid, but this silent appeal was powerful indeed. In the few moments he was on board he would look, anxiously, alternately at his Admiral and at the boats.

“After he left I held a consultation with Mr. Ward, and he agreed with me perfectly that, under all the circumstances of our position with the English and the aid the Admiral had tendered me the day before, I could do no less than to tow the boats to his relief.

“I made the offer, which was thankfully and promptly accepted.



“While the boats were making fast to hawsers, which I veered astern, I insisted on Mr. Ward and his suite leaving the *Toey-wan* and going on board the junks, for reasons that will be obvious.

“He at first reluctantly yielded, and left us, but soon returned in one of the English boats, declaring that, as the *Toey-wan* was his home and was going under fire with his approbation and concurrence, he would remain in her. I reluctantly yielded to his gallant impulse.

“At this time a young British officer came to me from the vessels engaged to say that the gallant Admiral was dangerously wounded, and had but six men left. He (the officer) had two boats sunk in reaching me.

“I towed the boats through the British line to within a short distance of the Admiral, whose flag was flying on the *Cormorant*, when, casting them off, I retired to the rear of the line, near the French gun-boat, and anchored for the night.

“I took up this position, as it might enable me to aid the wounded, and, should boats be sunk, to rescue their crews.

“After anchoring I thought of the Admiral and of his chivalrous kindness to me the day before, which, from an unwillingness to intrude on him when he was preparing for action, I had in no way acknowledged.

“I, therefore, with my Flag-lieutenant,—Mr. Trenchard,—went in my barge to visit him. When within a few feet of the *Cormorant* a round shot struck the boat, killed my Coxswain, and slightly bruised my Flag-lieutenant. We fortunately reached the *Cormorant* before the boat entirely filled.

“I found the Admiral lying on his quarter-deck badly wounded. I informed him that I had called to pay my

respects, and to express my regret at his condition. After remaining on board the *Cormorant* about ten minutes, I took advantage of an English boat that was passing to return to the *Toey-wan*.

“The *Cormorant* after this was sunk, and the Admiral shifted his flag to a fourth vessel,—the *Coromandel*,—(a thing, I believe, unprecedented), thus evincing an indomitable valor under very disheartening and almost hopeless circumstances.

“At dusk, about 8 P. M., a desperate attempt was made, by landing from boats, to storm the forts, but they stood in an impassible morass, and the assailants were repelled with heavy loss.

“On the morning following this day and night of slaughter—the action still continuing, but the fire more feeble and distant—I found that six of the English vessels were sunk, and that the remainder had withdrawn to a more distant and safer position, from which they could easily retire out of gunshot.

“I now prepared to return to the *Powhatan* with Mr. Ward, but first called on board the *Coromandel* to take leave of the Admiral, and also on board the French gun-boat, to inquire after the French Commodore,—Tricault,—whom I had met on board the *Cormorant* when I called on the Admiral, and who had subsequently been wounded.

“I deferred my departure, by request, that I might tow to their ships at sea two launch loads of the wounded English.

“On reaching the *Powhatan* I again dispatched the *Toey-wan* into the harbor, in charge of Lieutenant Johnston, (first of the *Powhatan*), with orders to remain at the mouth of the harbor, out of fire, and to afford all aid consistent with our neutrality. After an efficient perform-

ance of this duty for twenty-four hours he rejoined me.

“The sea officers with me in the *Toey-wan* on this service were Captain Pearson, Lieutenants Trenchard and Semmes, all of the *Powhatan*; and Midshipman Merchant of the *Germantown*. The Engineer officers were Messrs. City and Archer. Captain A. S. Taylor, of the marine corps, was also with me. I have to thank them for their zealous services.

“My Coxswain,—John Hart,—whose death I have to lament, was the son of John and Mary Hart, now living at Jamaica, Long Island. He was a widower, but has left a young daughter eight years old.

“I shall communicate the sad event to his parents, and as his child whom he supported will be entitled to a pension, may I beg the favor of you, sir, as soon as the proper papers shall be filed at the Department, to direct that the pension be issued without unnecessary delay?

“Hart had been a long time in the navy, having served under me fifteen years ago.

“The English retired this morning from the river, having recovered and brought out three of their sunken vessels and destroyed the others.

“Their loss is about four hundred and fifty killed and wounded, including twelve French. Eight officers are killed and twenty-three wounded; among the wounded are the four senior officers, including the Admiral and the French Commodore Tricault.

“They attacked with about twelve hundred men.

“I am, sir, with great respect, your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL, •

“Flag-officer Commanding East India Squadron.

“The Hon. Isaac Toucey,

“Secretary of the Navy, Washington.”

“Gallant Americans!” exclaims a writer in Blackwood’s Magazine, uttering the dominant sentiment of the British nation, “you and your Admiral did more that day to bind England and the United States together, than all your lawyers and pettifogging politicians have ever done to part us.”

Flag-officer Tattnall’s conduct on this occasion was but the spontaneous expression of the courageous, generous impulses which at all times pervaded his breast, and won for him not only the gratitude of the United Kingdom, but the admiration of the civilized world. His laconic excuse for his valorous act,—“*blood is thicker than water,*”—and the apology offered by his boat’s crew when called to account for practically overstepping the limits of neutrals while on board Admiral Hope’s stricken vessel,—“*beg pardon, sir, they were shorthanded at the bow-gun and so we giv’d them a help for fellowship sake,*”—will be treasured so long as brave words are honored and golden deeds applauded.

With the heroic memories of this affair, the name of the American Minister also will always be most honorably associated.

We introduce some of the correspondence relating to the action of Flag-officer Tattnall at the Pei-ho river, that the reader may appreciate how cordially it was approved by the Home Government, sincerely recognized by the English authorities, and gratefully acknowledged by the officers of the British squadron :

“COROMANDEL, OFF THE PEI-HO, 1st July, 1859.

“SIR: I have the honor to request you will accept my acknowledgment of the services which you found it consistent with your duty to permit your tender,—the *Toey-*

*wan*,—to render during the 25th ultimo, and especially in conveyance of the wounded to their vessels; and I beg you will accept my warmest thanks for the same.

“I have the honor to be, sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“J. HOPE,

“Rear-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief.”

“Flag-officer Tattnall, U. S. Steam-frigate *Powhatan*.”

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“U. S. STEAM-FRIGATE POWHATAN,

“FLAG-SHIP EAST INDIA SQUADRON,

“OFF PEI-HO RIVER, July 2d, 1859.

“Sir: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 1st instant, referring to the slight services it was in my power to render your gallant squadron on the 25th ultimo.

“It reminds me that I have not yet thanked you officially for your aid in extricating the *Toey-wan* from her embarrassing position when on shore near the batteries, on the 24th, and for your very kind and flattering tender of the services of one of your gun-boats, with the privilege of hoisting on board of her the American ensign and my own flag.

“This evidence of kindness and confidence from your service to ours will be justly appreciated by our Government, to whom I have communicated it.

“I have the honor to be, sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Flag-officer Commanding East India Squadron.”

“Rear-Admiral James Hope, Commander-in-Chief.”

“H. M. SHIP ASSISTANCE,

“GULF OF PECHEELEE, 1st July, 1859.

“Sir: Permit me to offer to yourself and to the officers under your command, the most sincere thanks of myself and officers for the very kind manner in which officers and detachments of the Royal Marines were received on board the *Toey-wan*, a few days ago; and for the very hospitable manner in which they were entertained while there.

“I should have done myself the honor of thanking you personally for this great attention and kindness, but am unfortunately prevented from so doing by a severe wound in the head, which I received on the 25th ultimo.

“I have the honor to be, etc., W. LEMON,

“Colonel Commanding Royal Marines, Expeditionary Force.”  
 “Flag-officer Tattnall, United States Navy.”

“WASHINGTON, October 10th, 1859.

“SIR: Her Majesty’s Minister in China has not failed to bear testimony to the friendly feeling of the United States Envoy, Mr. Ward, and of Flag-officer Tattnall, and to the assistance which they rendered during the late operations at the Pei-ho river.

“Her Majesty’s Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs has instructed me to express to the President of the United States, and to you, sir, the thanks of Her Majesty’s Government for the assistance thus rendered to Her Majesty’s service by those distinguished officers, and to request that such thanks may be conveyed to them through the regular official channel.

“I have the honor to be, with the highest consideration, sir,

“Your most obedient humble servant,

“LYONS.”

“The Honorable Lewis Cass, etc., etc., etc.

“WASHINGTON, October 17th, 1859.

“SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your note of the day before yesterday’s date, informing me that in compliance with my request, the thanks of Her Majesty’s Government will be conveyed to the United States Envoy in China,—Mr. Ward, and to Flag-officer Tattnall,—for the friendly feeling manifested, and the assistance given by them during the late operations at the mouth of the Pei-ho river.

“I have received by the mail, which has just arrived from London, instructions to address myself again to your kindness, and to request you to convey to Flag-officer Tattnall the best acknowledgments of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, for his courteous and valuable assistance on the occasion referred to.

“I have the honor to be,

“With the highest consideration, sir,

“Your most obedient humble servant,

“LYONS.”

“Honorable Lewis Cass, Secretary of State, etc., etc., etc.”

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“WASHINGTON, 17th October, 1859.

“MY LORD: I have the honor to state that General Cass has informed me that the United States Envoy in China,—Mr. Ward, and Flag-officer Tattnall,—will each be furnished with a copy of my note of the 10th instant, expressing the thanks of Her Majesty’s Government for the assistance rendered by those distinguished officers during the late operations at the mouth of the Pei-ho river.

“I have also the honor to inform you that I have requested that the best acknowledgments of the Lords Com-

missioners of the Admiralty may be conveyed to Flag-officer Tattnall, for his courteous and valuable assistance on the occasion referred to.

“In the course of the conversation which passed during a visit which I paid to the President on the evening of the 13th instant, he observed that one of the newspapers had blamed the conduct of Mr. Ward, and Flag-officer Tattnall, at the Pei-ho, as an improper departure from their neutral position, but that he was sure that the assistance rendered by them to Her Majesty’s ships had met with the hearty approbation of the great majority of the people of the United States.

“I have, etc.,

“LYONS.”

“To Lord John Russell, etc., etc., etc.”

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“NAVY DEPARTMENT, October 22d, 1859.

“SIR: I herewith enclose copies of two notes, dated the 10th and 17th instant, addressed to the Honorable Lewis Cass, Secretary of State, by Lord Lyons, the British Minister at Washington, expressing the thanks of Her Majesty’s Government and the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, for your courteous and valuable assistance to Her Majesty’s service during the late operations at the Pei-ho river.

“I am very respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“ISAAC TOUCEY.”

“Flag-officer Josiah Tattnall,

“Commanding U. S. East India Squadron,

“Hong Kong, China.”



“U. S. STEAM FRIGATE POWHATAN,  
“HONG KONG, CHINA, 28th December, 1859.

“SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 5th of October, containing the very gratifying intelligence of the Department’s approval of my course at the Pei-ho.

“I have received from the hands of the British Admiral a copy of a letter from Lord Lyons, relative to the same affair, of which I inclose a copy.

“I am, sir, with great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Flag-officer on return from command of  
“East India Squadron.”

“Hon. I. Toucey, Secretary of the Navy.”

“U. S. STEAM-FRIGATE POWHATAN,  
“HONG KONG, December 28th, 1859.

“SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 27th inst., and its accompaniment, the copy of a letter from Her Britanic Majesty’s Minister at Washington to Her Majesty’s Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, relative to the part taken by the American Minister and myself in the affair of the Pei-ho.

“I have the honor to be, etc.,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Flag-officer, etc.”

“Rear-Admiral J. Hope,

“Commander-in Chief Her Britanic Majesty’s

“Naval Forces in India and China.”

“CHESAPEAKE, AT HONG KONG, 30th December, 1859.”

“SIR: Should Flag-officer Tattnall be desirous of proceeding in the vessel you command to ‘Nagasaki,’ it is my direction that you receive him and his suite on board for that purpose; and you will, so far as the service in which you are engaged permits, suit his convenience as to the time of proceeding thither.

“Should you be on your return to Shanghai, you will further offer the Flag-officer a passage to that port.

“I have the honor to be, sir,

“Your obedient servant,

“J. HOPE,

“Rear-Admiral and Commander-in-Chief.”

“The Commander of any British vessel-of-war at Yedo.”

## CHAPTER NINTH.

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Minister Ward proceeds to Peking. Treaty exchanged. Return to Shanghai. The American Minister visits Japan as the guest of Flag-officer Tattnall. Preparations for receiving the Japanese Embassy on board the *Powhatan*. The command of the squadron transferred to Flag-officer Stribling. Departure for Japan.

On the 8th of July the American Minister and suite, with the Flag-officer, were conveyed in the *Toey-wan* toward the mouth of the Pehtang river. As the steamer approached the shoal water she was met by a pilot who conducted her to the entrance where the party was transferred to three large junks,—handsomely fitted up for the occasion,—which proceeded to the landing. Arrangements having been made for Mr. Ward's comfortable conveyance to Peking, under a suitable escort, he set off for that city on the morning of the 20th.

The following persons composed the Embassy :

His Excellency John E. Ward, Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary.

Dr. S. Wells Williams, W. Wallace Ward, Secretaries to the Legation.

Rev. W. A. P. Martin, Rev. Wm. Aitchison, Assistant Interpreters.

Lieutenant S. D. Trenchard, Flag-lieutenant.

John L. Fox, Surgeon, (temporarily attached to the *Powhatan*.)

B. F. Gallaher, Purser.

Lieutenant A. W. Habersham.

William H. Shock, Chief Engineer.

A. S. Taylor, Captain of Marines.

Henry Wood, Chaplain.

John W. Sandford, Jr., Assistant Surgeon.

George W. Heard, Esq., John L. Lurman, Attaches.

John Allmand, Secretary to Flag-officer Tattnall.

In addition to these officials, three marines accompanied the Embassy as orderlies to the Minister, and ten Chinese servants were taken to attend upon the party; among whom was an excellent cook whose services were found to be essential to comfort.

It was Flag-officer Tattnall's intention to have accompanied the Minister, but his health compelled him to decline the journey.

With the details of this visit and the circumstances attendant upon the exchange of the treaty, the reader is already familiar.

On the 17th of August the Embassy returned in the *Toey-wan*. "Her arrival was hailed by Flag-officer Tattnall and his officers as a relief from the monotony of their anchorage; and on the evening of the 18th the *Powhatan* sailed for Shanghai with the *Toey-wan* in tow."\*

Says Lieutenant Johnston, executive officer of the *Powhatan*:

"All were gratified by the results of Mr. Ward's perseverance in effecting the exchange of the treaty, and felt that, although it had been accomplished at some little sacrifice of national and ministerial pride, the evident anxiety of the Mandarins to cultivate friendly relations with him after the catastrophe at Taku, and the absence of any stipulation in the treaty of Tientsin requiring the exchange to take place at the Capital, constrained him to accept the

\* Lieutenant Johnston's China and Japan, p. 271. Philadelphia, 1860.

Emperor's proposal to perform that ceremony at Pehtang. The beneficial operation of the treaty was soon felt upon American commerce, and the English lost no time in demanding the extension of all its privileges and immunities to theirs, under the 'most favored nation' clause of former treaties."

The anchorage near Woosung was reached at meridian on the 22d of August and the Minister and his suite, with the Flag-officer, went immediately to Shanghai in the *Toeywan*; the former "receiving a parting salute of seventeen guns, as his official connection with the *Powhatan* terminated with the return of the Embassy from Peking."

"By the mail steamer which reached Shanghai on the 15th of September, Flag-officer Tattnell received information from the Navy Department that the steamer *Hartford* had sailed from the United States for Hong Kong with Flag-officer C. K. Stribling on board, appointed to relieve him in the command of the East India squadron; but the same mail brought, also, a communication authorizing him to return to the United States *via* Cape Horn, touching at Yedo, for the purpose of affording a passage to the Japanese Embassy as far as Panama on their route to this country. Although there was nothing in this document which could be construed into an *order* to return by the route indicated, or to detain the ship on the station until the time appointed for the embarkation of the Embassy (the 22d of February, 1860), Flag-officer Tattnell did not hesitate to assume the responsibility of adopting this course, or of incurring the expenses attending the accommodation of so large an accession to the number of persons on board the ship. As there was some uncertainty, however, as to whether the Japanese Government would not finally con-

clude to defer sending an Embassy to the United States some months longer, and the Flag-officer desired to communicate with our Minister at Yedo on the subject as early as practicable, the ship was prepared for sea with all dispatch.

“As Mr. Ward was enjoying a brief respite from the duties of his official position, he determined to embrace the opportunity offered him through the kind invitation of the Flag-officer, to catch a hasty glimpse of the beautiful country and the interesting people of whom he had heard such glowing accounts from the officers of the ship. With this pleasing prospect in view, he came on board, attended by his suite, on the 17th, and the next morning the *Powhatan* got under way to make her fourth visit to the glorious harbor of Nagasaki.”

The passage across the confluent waters of the Yellow and Japan seas to the picturesque Island of Kin-Sin was accomplished in three days. All being eager to reach the imperial city of Yedo, the *Powhatan* remained at anchor only one day at Nagasaki. In prosecuting her voyage, however, she encountered some derangement in her machinery which necessitated a return to this port and entailed a delay of several days. This interval was improved by going ashore and “seeing the lions of the place.” There Mr. Ward purchased a Japanese suit of armor which he presented to Flag-officer Tattnall. The Commodore declining the handsome gift, the Minister subsequently donated it to the Georgia Historical Society in Savannah, where it may still be seen.

Yokuhama was reached on the 3d of October, and soon after the *Powhatan* proceeded to the anchorage off the city of Yedo.

Here it was ascertained that the Japanese Embassy would certainly be ready to embark for the United States on the 1st of February, 1860. The object of the visit being accomplished, and the American Minister having a diplomatic engagement which would admit of no further delay, the Commodore sailed for Shanghai on the morning of the 12th, and, after a pleasant passage, reached his old anchorage off Woosung, on the 17th.

At nine o'clock in the morning of the 24th the *Powhatan* was again under way for Kanagawa. At Yedo information reached the Flag-officer that the Embassy would consist of nineteen officers and fifty-two attendants. It was necessary to return to Hong Kong to make final preparations for receiving the Embassy on board, and that harbor was reached on the 20th of November. There the command of the squadron was transferred to Flag-officer Stribling, who had arrived in the United States steam-sloop *Hartford*.

All necessary arrangements having been made for the comfortable conveyance of the Embassy, "on the 30th of December," says Lieutenant Johnston,—to whose interesting work we are largely indebted for memoranda illustrative of Commodore Tattnall's movements during the period of his command on this station,—“the Flag-officer entertained at dinner on board, all the principal American merchants of the city, accompanied by General Keenan, United States Consul, and the occasion was marked with the most cordial and heartfelt expressions of reciprocal respect.

“The next morning we got under way, and making a graceful turn outside of the shipping at anchor in the bay, passed to the eastward between the English frigates *Chesapeake* and *Cambrian*, near which were anchored several smaller vessels of the squadron under Admiral Hope's com-

mand. At the moment that our ship was abreast of the two frigates, the crews of all these vessels rushed aloft simultaneously, and gave three hearty cheers as a parting salutation,—a compliment which I doubt any American man-of-war ever received before from a foreign squadron. The cheers were answered immediately, and as we passed ahead of the Admiral's ship, we fired a salute of thirteen guns, with the English flag at the fore, in return for the courtesy extended by his orders. The *Chesapeake* answered the salute, and we steamed gallantly out to sea through the Lymoon passage, bidding a final farewell to Hong Kong and to China."



## CHAPTER TENTH.

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Arrival at Yokuhama. The Japanese Embassadors received on board the *Powhatan*. Departure for the United States. Touches at Honolulu. Complimentary letter from the British residents. The *Powhatan* at San Francisco. Flag-officer Tattnall proceeds to Washington. Welcome and congratulations there extended. Assigned to the command of the Lake Station, with his headquarters at Sackett's Harbor.

Yokuhama bay was reached on the 11th of January, 1860, after a boisterous and disagreeable passage.

It being ascertained that the rooms built on deck were insufficient for the suitable accommodation of the members of the Embassy, the ship's carpenters were set to work to prepare two additional staterooms. On the 16th the Embassadors came on board to pay their respects to Flag-officer Tattnall, and inspect the ship which was to convey them to the United States. They were received with a salute of seventeen guns, and "expressed themselves highly gratified by the attentions shown them, and the appearance of everything on board."

The Flag-officer was informed that their preparations for embarkation would all be complete on the 9th of February.

"Punctual to the hour appointed," says Lieutenant Johnston, "the Embassadors, with their numerous retinue, were seen coming alongside of the ship with a fleet of thirty boats, at 3 P. M., on the 9th, and arrangements were immediately made for their reception, with all the marks of naval etiquette due to their elevated rank. The Japanese flag was run up at the fore, and the men called to their stations for saluting, the officers paraded on the starboard side of

the quarter-deck in uniform, the marine guard on the opposite side, and the boatswain with his pipe and six 'side boys,' standing by to pipe them over the side, while the band was in readiness to strike up our own national air in honor of the occasion, the Japanese anthem not having been composed as yet. The Embassadors were received at the gangway by the Flag-officer, and escorted to the poop-deck, on reaching which the salute of seventeen guns was thundered forth from our heavy battery, to their infinite surprise and satisfaction.

"Immediately after the ceremonies of the reception were concluded, the usual quiet and systematic routine of duties progressed in their ordinary channels, and desiring to make an early acquaintance with the relative rank and individual appellations of the large accession to the number, for whose suitable accommodation it devolved upon me to assign quarters, I hastened to procure from the principal interpreter a correct list of the persons composing the Embassy, which is here subjoined :

"Embassador No. 1,—Simme-Boozen-no-kami.

"Embassador No. 2,—Muragaki-Awadsi-no-kami.

"Chief Censor (or Spy),—Ogure-Bungo-no-kami.

"Officers of 1st rank belonging to Embassadors,—Naruse Gensiro, Tsucahara Jugoro.

"Officers of 1st rank belonging to Censor,—Hetaka Keisaburo, Osakabe Tetstaro.

"Under officers belonging to the Embassadors,—Matsmoto Sannojo, Yosida Sagosaimon.

"Under officers belonging to the Treasurer,—Masudu Sunjuro, Tuge Hosingoro.

"Under officers belonging to the Censor,—Kurisima Hico-hatsiro, Lewo-sawa-Scojoro.

“Interpreters,—Namoorā Gohatsiro, Tateise Tokujuro, Tateise Onogero.

“Doctors,—Meodake, Moriyama, Cowasaki.

“This list comprises the number of officials of all grades who came on board, to which must be added fifty-two attendants with various distinct vocations—such as barbers, pike-bearers, armorers, and servants, making a total of seventy-one persons.

“The boats containing the baggage, amounting in all to more than fifty tons, were permitted to come alongside at the conclusion of the salute, and, in a brief space of time, the endless variety of packages, consisting of chests, boxes, bales, tubs, bundles, buckets, bowls, cooking utensils, etc., etc., was transferred to our decks, and distributed so rapidly by the intelligent attendants, with slight assistance from the crew, that some little wonder was excited as to what disposition had been made of them. The interpreters were instructed concerning the designation of the various apartments appropriated to the Embassy; and in the course of an hour these seventy-one strangers, but few of whom had ever before been on the deck of any vessel larger than one of their native junks, were as quietly and comfortably quartered as if they had spent their lives in a man-of-war.

“As soon as the boats were discharged of their contents, the ship was got under way for Kanagawa, and reached the anchorage near that town at about 7 P. M.”

Just as the *Powhatan* was on the point of proceeding to sea, it became necessary for the Flag-officer to institute an official investigation into some allegations of partiality on the part of the Custom House officials at Yokuhama, by which they were charged with dispensing an undue amount of itzibus to the officers of the *Powhatan*. As the honor

of his officers was involved, the Commodore caused a rigorous examination to be made, which demonstrated the falsity of the charge, and completely refuted certain invidious aspersions which the English Consul General had attempted to cast upon both the Japanese and American officers.

Any necessity for further delay being removed, on the morning of the 13th of February, 1860, the *Powhatan* got under way with the Japanese imperial ensign flying at the fore, and, passing the town of Uraga, "steamed quietly round Cape Sirofama into the rolling swell of the broad Pacific."

It was the first time in the history of that Empire that Embassadors had ever been sent to a foreign government. The Japanese were unskilled in navigation, and were compelled to trust to a foreign vessel the transportation of their diplomatic representatives. Having materially assisted in consummating the treaty, Flag-officer Tattnell,—looking to the early establishment of commercial and friendly relations between the two governments,—was most solicitous, during the voyage, to extend to the Embassadors every courtesy, and impress them with favorable views of the United States. His hospitalities were most marked, decorous, and profuse, and were productive of the happiest influences.

Touching at Honolulu, Flag-officer Tattnell and his guests were the recipients of the most distinguished marks of consideration and kindness from the officials and prominent citizens of the place, and also from the King himself.

The day previous to his departure, he was presented with the following letter signed by the British residents at Honolulu, who, in consequence of the shortness of his visit, were prevented from carrying into effect their intention of tendering to him a public demonstration :

“HONOLULU, March 17, 1860.

“To the Honorable JOSIAH TATNALL,

“Flag-officer Commanding U. S. East India Squadron :

“SIR: We, the undersigned, British residents of the Hawaiian Islands, beg leave to express to you, and to the Captain and officers of the United States frigate *Powhatan*, our deep regret that your departure from Honolulu at an earlier day than we were led to expect, deprives us of the honor and pleasure of offering to you a more public and fitting manifestation of the feelings of gratitude and admiration with which we regard your gallant and humane conduct towards our countrymen on the occasion of the late unfortunate affair at the Pei-ho river.

“United as our respective countries are in blood, civilization, and commerce, we cannot undervalue, and do fully appreciate such instances of the brotherhood of the two nations, as were so nobly exemplified by you, and the officers and men under your command, on the occasion above referred to.

“The truly brave are ever generous and humane, and such instances of bravery and kindness tend more than interest or diplomacy to awaken the liveliest sympathy, and stir the heart of a great and kindred people with the noblest emotions.

“In conclusion we pray that your life may be long spared to the credit and honor of your country, and that you may reap that reward so justly due to one who has so signally and gallantly proved that ‘blood is thicker than water.’

“With the highest consideration and esteem, we are, sir,

“Your obedient servants,

“(Signed by the British residents.”

We quote again from Lieutenant Johnston’s narrative :

“On the 18th we bade adieu to the many pleasing ac-

quaintances and friends, who had made our stay in their midst one continued ovation in honor of the country and the service to which we belonged, and received us with an open-handed hospitality which made it difficult to realize that we were in a foreign land. Steaming out of the harbor late in the afternoon, the course was set again for the 'Golden Gate' of San Francisco, and as the weather proved unusually mild and pleasant, the passage to that long-sought haven was accomplished in the short space of ten and a half days, anchoring off the city on the morning of the 29th, with the Japanese flag at the fore, to indicate the presence of the Embassy on board. The revenue cutter *Jefferson Davis*, at anchor in the harbor, announced the distinguished arrival by a salute of seventeen guns, which was duly returned by the *Powhatan*, the report of whose guns soon called a tremendous crowd of anxious gazers to the wharves, and a number of visitors on board, to behold the representatives of the populous and wealthy empire which seemed suddenly to have sprung into existence, and had sent them with a friendly greeting to the *Eureka* of the West.

"The freedom of the city was extended to the entire Embassy, and also to the officers of the *Powhatan*, none of them being allowed to pay their own hotel bills or carriage hire during their stay in the place, and the inhabitants generally evincing a friendly interest in every one connected with the ship or the Embassy."

Deeming it proper and expedient to precede the Embassy, Commodore Tattnall took passage in the mail steamer of the 5th of April, and, in due course, arrived in New York. Thence he proceeded to Washington to report, and to suggest such arrangements as appeared suitable for the reception of the Japanese Embassadors. He was welcomed

at the Department and in the Capital with every consideration, and was on every hand the recipient of the most cordial congratulations upon the services he had performed and the honors he had gained for himself and country.

As indicating the tone of the press, we clip the following from one of the prominent journals of the day :

“Commodore Tattnall, recently in command of the East India squadron, and who has just returned home in the *Powhatan*, via San Francisco (having left that vessel there with the Japanese Embassy), has been the recipient of distinguished honors since his arrival in Washington.

“On Tuesday last he was received at the Navy Yard with military honors, and hospitably entertained by Commodore Buchanan in the midst of a brilliant assemblage of ladies and naval officers. On Wednesday he was cordially received and entertained by his Excellency the British Minister ; and on Thursday, we understand, he partook, by special invitation, of the elegant hospitalities of the President of the United States.

“These high marks of respect were richly merited by the veteran officer who behaved so gallantly in the sanguinary battle on the Pei-ho between the British and French forces on the one side, and on the other the infuriated myriads of Chinamen, who hurled their missiles of death and destruction from behind ‘invulnerable ramparts of mud’ upon the sinking or disabled vessels of Admiral Hope. His humane and heroic conduct on that memorable occasion entitles him to the gratitude of civilized mankind.”

Flag-officer Tattnall was present, on the 17th of May, when the Japanese Embassadors were presented to the President and pledges of amity between the two countries were exchanged.

Three days afterwards, he was assigned to the command of the Lake Station, with his headquarters at Sackett's Harbor. This was most pleasing to him, for here had he many friends, and here could he enjoy comparative freedom from care and labor. He was sadly in need of rest and physical recuperation.



## CHAPTER ELEVENTH.

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Secession of the State of Georgia. Captain Tattnall's views on the question of Secession. The devotion of a naval officer to his flag. Trying situation. Resolves to respond to the call of his native State. Resigns his commission in the United States Navy. Letter of acceptance. Proceeds to Montgomery, Alabama. Letter to Governor Brown tendering his sword to Georgia. Commissioned Senior Flag-officer in the Navy of Georgia. Letters of Governor Brown and Adjutant-General Wayne. Commissioned a Captain in the Confederate States navy. Assigned to the naval defense of South Carolina and Georgia.

It was while he was in command at Sackett's Harbor that the political disagreement, which had long been pending, culminated in the secession of the Southern States. Commodore Tattnall was an ardent lover of the American Union as contemplated in and guarded by the provisions of the Constitution. With the principles, objects, and aims of that Constitution as framed by the fathers of the instrument, and as expounded by the great and good men of the nation, he was entirely familiar. The equality of the States and the rights of person and property as guaranteed by fundamental law, he fully appreciated. For nearly fifty years had he followed the flag of his country in sunshine and in storm. In his eyes it was the symbol of all that was patriotic, noble, and of high repute. Its honor he had ever vindicated. To its service the devotion of a life had been paid. Among its supporters were his most intimate friends and chosen companions, whose society was a sweet solace to his declining years. The allegiance of a naval officer to the flag of his country is more absolute than that of soldier

or civilian. In the very nature of the case that symbol of nationality, borne aloft upon the high seas and receiving tributes of respect wherever displayed in distant ports, comes to be regarded as the ever present proof of a people's entity, as the blazon of that people's honor and power. To bear it nobly, and,—away from government and officials,—under sudden and trying circumstances, to maintain its dignity unsullied, is the pride of the true sailor. To extend its protection and relief in lonely places, is his frequent duty. To uphold it manfully in the face of opposition is his special trust. Bound up in that flag are his highest and holiest hopes. It gladdens his eye in the sunshine of peace, and covers his head in the day of battle. He rejoices in the deep-toned thunders which salute its presence, and glories in the grand defiance which leaps from under its folds. His world lies within its shadow. Its service is his reward, and by this token are his companionships confirmed.

To leave the service of the United States navy with all its honors upon him, with chosen friends about him,—to withdraw his allegiance from a flag which he had upheld so long and so bravely,—to throw up a commission won by nearly a half century of valor and devotion, whose emoluments were essential to the comfort and maintenance of wife and daughters,—to espouse the cause of the weak and the oppressed at the expense of friend and government, and flag and position, involved the exercise of manhood, self-negation, and adherence to principle most wonderful. In one sense Commodore Tattnall had everything to lose and nothing to gain.

His native State, Georgia, had seceded from the Federal Union for cause which her people deemed just and sufficient.

She called upon her sons everywhere to rally to her standard, for the air was filled with threats of violence and coercion. His action, under the circumstances, was just what might have been expected from one of his exalted manhood and knightly honor. The traditions of his native State to whom his supreme allegiance was due, his Southern blood, and his personal qualities of courage and chivalry inclining him always to sympathy with the feeble and the wronged, all drew him with a pathos, which his great heart sought not to withstand, to the immediate service of Georgia. Regarding not his advanced years, laying aside the allurements of present position, with its honors and emoluments so essential to his own comfort and the support of those who were dependent upon him, and spurning all considerations of a personal and selfish character, he without hesitancy determined to obey the call and follow the fortunes of his native State. He paused not to criticize her action. As a loyal son, at the expense of everything, he resolved to come to her rescue. He did what General Robert E. Lee did under similar circumstances; and even the most malevolent cannot find it in his conscience to gainsay the heroism and the genuine patriotism of the act. The question was one not of expediency, but of duty; not of casuistry, but of self sacrifice and loyalty to State and people. In Georgia he held no property, and therefore there entered into his brave soul no sordid fear of confiscation. South of the Potomac there was nothing which specially claimed protection at his hands save his State and her people. In the rectitude of her position, when assumed, he confided. To her supremacy he yielded. It would be idle to deny that this resolution to sever his connection with the navy of the United States was formed

without pain and regret. Most keenly did he deplore the necessity, and yet most heroically did he respond to the emergency. Had his course, under these trying circumstances, been other than it was, it would have stultified our conception of his exalted character. In the expediency and policy of secession we believe Commodore Tattnall did not sympathize. From the first he was of opinion that war,—gigantic war,—would be born of the act, with all the chances of ultimate success in favor of the Northern States with their vast preponderance of wealth and men and munitions. To a naval officer of rank and experience the prospect of command in the Confederacy,—entirely destitute of vessels of war and without the means of facile construction,—was gloomy and depressing. The thought of turning his back upon so many of his brother officers, and of taking service in opposition to them was peculiarly trying. Some of them,—such for example as Rear Admiral Hiram Paulding and Captain Henry W. Morris,—he cherished with fraternal affection. But, although these things deeply moved him, they did not deter him from the performance of what he conceived to be his duty.

Proceeding to Washington he resigned the commission which he held in the navy of the United States. Its acceptance was couched in the following language :

“NAVY DEPARTMENT, 21st February, 1861.

“SIR: Your resignation as a Captain in the navy of the United States, tendered in your letter of the 20th instant, is hereby accepted.

“I am, respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“I. TOUCEY.”

“Josiah Tattnall, Esq., Late Captain U. S. Navy,

“Washington, D. C.”

The President of the United States, and the Secretary of State,—the Honorable Lewis Cass,—in the kindest terms urged him to reconsider his determination. Most flatteringly did they allude to his present position and past services in the navy, and earnestly did they express their regrets that the service was about to lose an officer so much valued and honored. The Secretary of the Navy also took leave of the Commodore with warm expressions of sympathy, and of sincere regret for the necessity which impelled him to the adoption of this course.

His accounts adjusted, he went to Montgomery, Alabama,—where the Provisional Congress of the Confederate States was then in session,—that he might observe the operations of the newly formed government and render any aid in his power.

From that city he addressed the following communication to the Governor of Georgia :

“MONTGOMERY, ALABAMA,

“25th February, 1861.

“YOUR EXCELLENCY :

“I received, on the 12th instant, at Sackett’s Harbor (Lake Ontario) where I was then in command, an ordinance of the convention of the State of Georgia, of the 25th January last, providing for the reception into the service of the State of those officers of the navy of the United States, citizens of Georgia, who might resign their commissions.

“I accordingly repaired, without delay, to Washington, and having tendered, on the 20th instant, the resignation of my commission, hastened to this city; judging from a telegraphic dispatch I received from Mr. Toombs that such would be your wish.

“The acceptance of my resignation has only this day reached me.

“I have now the honor to report myself to your Excellency, and to inform you that I shall await your orders at this place.

“I have the honor to be,

“Your Excellency’s

“Obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Late Captain United States Navy.”

In due course the following replies were received from Governor Brown and Adjutant-General Wayne :

“EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

“MILLEDGEVILLE, GEORGIA,

“February 28th, 1861.

“JOSIAH TATTNALL, Late Captain United States Navy :

“DEAR SIR :

“Your patriotic letter of the 25th instant is now before me, in which you inform me of your resignation of the position which you have long held in the United States Navy, in which it affords me pleasure to know you have rendered signal and distinguished services to your country. You now tender your services to your native State, which, as her Executive, I gladly accept.

“I herewith transmit to you a commission as Senior Flag-officer in the navy of Georgia and respectfully request its acceptance, after which, as soon as convenient, you will please report in person to this Department for orders.

“I have the honor to be, very respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSEPH E. BROWN.”

“EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT,

“ADJUTANT-GENERAL’S OFFICE,

“MILLEDGEVILLE, GA., February 28, 1861.

“Senior Flag-officer JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Georgia Navy, Montgomery, Ala. :

“SIR :

“His Excellency, the Governor and Commander-in-Chief of this State, desires me to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th instant, which he will also reply to himself, and to enclose to you the commission within of Senior Flag-officer in the navy in the service of the State of Georgia, to correspond in all respects with that rank in the United States service. If you accept the commission, fill up and subscribe the oath of allegiance, also enclosed, and return it with your letter of acceptance to this office for file, and report for duty to the Commander-in-Chief.

“Very respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“HENRY C. WAYNE,

“Adjutant-General.”

This commission of Senior Flag-officer in the navy of Georgia was accepted by Commodore Tattnall. In March, 1861, having received from the Provisional Government of the Confederate States a commission as Captain in the Confederate Navy, he applied to the Governor of Georgia for his instructions with regard to the acceptance or refusal of such commission. At the instance of the Governor he did accept that commission, and was thereupon ordered to take command of the naval defense of the waters of Georgia and South Carolina. For this service he was directed to improvise a squadron composed of such light steamers and river

craft as he might be able to secure. This he did as efficiently as the limited means at command would permit. His force was distributed along the coast from Port Royal to the sounds south of the mouth of the Savannah; the present mission being to render assistance to vessels expected from England with munitions of war for the State of Georgia and the Confederate States.



## CHAPTER TWELFTH.

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Confederate naval operations in Port Royal harbor in November, 1861.

Having received information that the Federal fleet had left Fortress Monroe for Port Royal, Commodore Tattnall at once departed from Savannah with his little squadron for that point. On arrival, he found the enemy with forty-one vessels off that port. An advance division of the fleet, consisting of ten vessels, was engaged in sounding the channel from which the Confederates had removed all marks and buoys. With a view to the interruption of these operations, and to cause delay in the impending demonstration against the Confederate defenses so that they might be further strengthened, Commodore Tattnall, with three of his wretched little river steamers, attacked this division. After an engagement of forty minutes he was compelled, by the long-range rifle guns of the enemy, to retire under the guns of the Confederate batteries. So frail was the character of his vessels, and so light their armament when contrasted with the heavy metal of the opposing ships, that close action was entirely out of the question. That the preliminary surveys of the enemy might be further impeded, and to gain time for the Confederate land forces busily engaged in confirming their positions, Commodore Tattnall renewed the attack at day-light the next morning. In this affair his flag-ship, the *Savannah*, sustained slight injury.

On the morning of the 7th of November, 1861, the enemy entered the harbor of Port Royal, and, after an engagement of some four hours, silenced the Confederate forts. As the

frigate *Minnesota*,—flying the flag of Flag-officer Dupont,—led in, Commodore Tattnall opened fire upon her.

For the particulars of this engagement, so far as they relate to the Confederate naval vessels then present, we refer to the ensuing contemporaneous account penned by an eye-witness :

“EDITOR SAVANNAH REPUBLICAN :

“Having been present on board of the Confederate States steamer *Savannah*, bearing the flag of Flag-officer Tattnall, during the late, to us, disastrous fight at Port Royal, I feel it to be an act no more than due to the officers and men of the several government vessels therein engaged, to report to the public the *role* that each and all of them sustained with honor to themselves and to the cause, of the ultimate success of which, by their patriotism, skill, and bravery, they are no unfitting exponents.

“It is, and long has been, a matter of deep regret to the officers of our nascent navy that the Confederate Government has not hitherto been able to afford them, in their line, facilities to reap results, as glorious or valuable to the greater advancement of our cause as have been obtained by the land forces in Virginia and elsewhere. But notwithstanding all this, wherever they have been placed, and under whatsoever adverse circumstances they have labored, their services will, no doubt, in future be acknowledged and appreciated in the impartial reckoning of results and distribution of favors at the end of this war.

“The fleet with which Flag-officer Tattnall has been furnished to encounter the navy of the enemy is, by no means, of as powerful a character as even the now overstrained resources of the government might readily place

in his charge. One frail river steamboat, the *Savannah*, with two or three tugs improvised into 'men-of-war,' comprises his whole force. Our entire appreciation of this fact may, perhaps, the more clearly enable people to acknowledge the merit of the late action, and the advantages, derived thereby, from our little naval force at Port Royal.

"It was on the morning of the 2d ultimo that Flag-officer Tattall received reliable information at Savannah that the enemy's fleet had sailed from Hampton Roads for Port Royal, South Carolina. He instantly departed thence with his whole available force, consisting of the paddle steamer gun-vessels *Savannah*, 2d Lieutenant Commanding J. N. Maffitt; the *Resolute*, 2d Lieutenant Commanding J. Pembroke Jones; the *Sampson*, 2d Lieutenant Commanding J. Kennard; and the *Lady Davis*, 2d Lieutenant Commanding J. Rutledge.

"The Monday after his arrival, he found the enemy, forty-four sail strong, off the mouth of the harbor. Perceiving several of their vessels to be engaged near the bar in taking soundings, he instantly, with his small force, attacked them at a distance of but a mile and a half; and, after a cannonading of forty minutes, during which he succeeded in entrapping three of the enemy's screw pelters under the fire of our batteries, finding that he had to encounter English rifled guns, he retired inside the harbor.

"The day after (Tuesday), he again engaged the enemy at long shots for upwards of half an hour, apparently with some effect; the flag ship *Savannah* receiving no further injury from the reception of two shots, than a temporary one to her upper works, and the remaining vessels of the squadron receiving no hurt whatever.

"Early in the evening of this day we were all much grati-

fied by the arrival of Captain Page, Confederate Navy, of Virginia, the second in command to Flag-officer Tattnall, of the Georgia and Carolina coast. This accomplished officer, whose reputation in the old service, to which he has long been a bright ornament, is well known, was a most valuable addition to our force, and, as events proved, to the army also, which is somewhat indebted to his personal exertions for the satisfactory retreat made by them, when even their usual bravery, most memorably displayed as it was, failed to quite support them in their hour of need.

“Every one on board the little fleet expected an attack from the enemy during the night, yet every officer and man of it was cool and collected. Sensible of the fearful odds which, at any moment, they might be called upon to encounter, and fully resolved to meet, as far as lay in their power, any issue forced upon them with the spirit of ‘true Southern sailors,’ they awaited, with courage in their hearts and resolve stamped upon their every countenance, the approach of a foe to whom, from old association, they took peculiar pride in showing themselves ready to stand by their cause like men ‘*sans peur et sans reproche*.’ But the American fleet did not attempt an entrance, and morning dawn showed it to be in the position of the day previous. Another twenty-four hours passed only to reveal the same mysterious inaction on the part of the enemy.

“Thursday morning, however, at about half-past nine, their fleet was seen to ‘get under way’ and stand into the harbor in the following order: The *Minnesota*, 51, a screw, leading, the flag of Flag-officer Dupont at the mizzen, closely followed by the paddle-wheel steam frigate *Susquehannah*, 15; the *San Jacinto*, 14, screw steam corvette, and a number of screw and paddle pelters, mounting rifled guns, one of

which towed in a sailing 'Jackass frigate,' not recognized by our officers with certainty, but supposed to have been the *Cumberland*, 24. At nine o'clock, having got within range, they opened quite a heavy fire upon the batteries, which was returned by them with spirit.

"Flag-officer Tattnall ordered the anchor of the *Savannah* hove up when the enemy had advanced to within a mile and a half of him, and steaming up toward Hilton Head battery, took a raking position upon the bow of the largest American frigate, then hotly engaging it, and opened fire with his thirty-two's upon her, to which, however, she did not deign immediately to reply.

"Our distance was too great (being that of a mile), and our guns were of too light a calibre to enable us to do her much, if any, injury. Several excellent shots were made by Midshipman B. Moses, commanding the after gun, but with what effect was, of course, impossible for us to determine. All this time the enemy's frigate was gradually nearing us for the double purpose of enfilading the battery and returning the respects of our little vessel; but the Commodore, disliking to *run* unless under a fire, and that a hot one, only gave the order to retreat when the frigate, rounding to, discharged her first gun at us, and the *Susquehanna* commenced a pursuit.

"We soon found the frigate to be rapidly gaining upon us, and that if we were not in the meantime blown out of the water, Skull creek was our only haven of refuge from a prison in the great American metropolis. The *Minnesota*, evidently disposed to return our attentions of the last two days once and forever, discharged, at a distance of eight hundred yards, three broadsides in quick succession against our miserable cockle-shell, but thanks to her poor gunnery

and our luck, we were only hit once by an eleven inch shell that entered our port wheel-house, carrying away bulk-heads and stancheons, though hurting no one, from the fact that it did not explode, and lit upon the starboard side of the gun-deck, passing within two feet of Captain Page who was superintending the working of the forward gun. At this juncture we were so close to the enemy's ships that their crews could, with the naked eye, be distinctly seen ramming home the guns, and Flag-officer Tattnall regretting his inability to return the high-flown compliments of Flag-officer Dupont in a more satisfactory manner, ordered his blue flag dipped three times to him in token of his acknowledgments of the same.

"We reached Skull creek in safety at about eleven o'clock, and went alongside of 'Seabrook's Landing,' when the Flag-officer instantly dispatched our marines, under the command of Captain G. Holmes, of Savannah, an experienced officer, over the other side of the island to render assistance to the fatigued garrison of the battery,—Captain Page, at the request of the Flag-officer, superintending the debarkation.

"They were followed an hour afterwards by Flag-officer Tattnall, Captain Page, and Midshipman Barron Carter, of Augusta,—the Flag-officer's Aid,—who preceded all the available seamen of the steam gun-vessels *Savannah* and *Sampson*, with some few marines of the latter vessel under the command of Lieutenant Philip Porcher, of South Carolina, ordered to make speed with all our naval ammunition to the battery which, at this time, appeared to be hard pressed.

"I accompanied the command of Lieutenant Porcher to within a half mile of the battery. Before reaching that point, however, the firing between the battery and shipping

had ceased, and the Lieutenant, from the number of straggling soldiers *en route* to the landing 'in search of their companies,' thought things not exactly as they should be, and so remarked, but he nevertheless kept on his course until informed officially by an army officer, of the garrison being in the enemy's possession, and advised him to 'make the best of his way back to his vessel.' This advice he partially followed by countermarching his men, in good order, at common time.

"I, however, not being an active participant in the affair, but merely a spectator, pushed further on to learn the fate of the Flag-officer, and Captain Holmes' command, and met them at a distance of a quarter of a mile from the battery. Captain Holmes was missing. He, upon his near approach to the fort, had gone on in advance of his company to see how matters stood and had not returned, when the Commodore finding all to be lost, and conceiving the Captain to have been captured, ordered Lieutenant Raney, of Florida, the second in command, to follow after him with his men to the steamer; to use his own words, 'feeling no fear for the success of the retreat, or his personal safety, with so reliable an officer in his rear.'

"When we reached Seabrook's Landing the steamer *Savannah* had left for the city to repair damages sustained in the engagement, but the paddle gun-vessel *Sampson*, Lieutenant Commanding Kennard, received us all on board, and afterwards, at the request of certain army officers, many of the volunteers who, most unfortunately, had not yet been able to find their companies, and were consequently in much disorder. The embarkation of these last was superintended by Captain Page, and detained us until late in the evening.

“At 11 o'clock the paddle gun-vessel *Resolute*, 2d Lieutenant Commanding Jones, arrived at Pope's Jetty from Savannah, where she had been sent early in the morning with dispatches from the Flag-officer commanding. At this Jetty Lieutenant Jones found a crowd of soldiers who expressed an evident desire to 'join their companies on the opposite shore,' and gave earnest that were he to tow them over to it in flats procured for the purpose, it would be a small favor gratefully received. This much he did for them, and made a report to the Flag-officer afterwards, from whom he received a warm approval for 'the celerity with which he had executed his orders,' and for 'the new instance of that discretion he always evinced whenever left to the exercise of his better judgment.'

“One act performed by the navy was so important to the safe retreat of the troops and, withal, so illustrative of the two gallant officers, Lieutenants Jones and Johnston who conceived it, that, upon the common principle, although apostolic, of 'honor to whom honor is due,' I cannot forbear from giving it a passing notice.

“It seems that Lieutenant Commanding Jones, after he had taken off to his steamer all the troops from Pope's Jetty whom he supposed desirous to retreat on board, returned to the other one, in order to communicate with the Flag-officer, and, upon his arrival there, learned that two brass guns were left mounted and unspiked by an artillery company on the jetty he had just left. He instantly, with Lieutenant Johnston, Confederate Navy, of Tennessee, volunteered to attempt their recovery, which proposition was readily accepted and warmly approved by the Commander-in-Chief. Accordingly, at about twelve o'clock, his steamer, the *Resolute*, again changing her course, reached



the lower, or Pope's Jetty, when Lieutenant Johnston, at the order of Mr. Jones, went ashore, accompanied by young Midshipman Chew, and found the guns in the same position and condition in which they had been described. The Lieutenant, however, not desiring by a hasty act to possibly retard, if not disconcert any plan of the army, first hailed a steamboat containing the company whose guns they were, desiring to know if they contemplated leaving them behind, and received for reply that, 'not being of any further use to them, they were spiked and left.' Lieutenant Johnston readily removed with his fingers the ends of two priming wires that had been thrust into the touch-holes of the guns and substituted in their places substantial rat-tail files, with which he had provided himself for the purpose. He then succeeded in dismounting one of the guns and throwing it overboard; the other he was obliged to leave on its carriage on the wharf, for want of time.

"Flag-officer Tattnall left the island, with the *Resolute* and *Sampson*, at about 2 A. M. for Savannah, which he reached a little after day-light, carrying with him as passengers many of the officers and men from the captured garrison.

"It is, Mr. Editor, superfluous to mention the conduct of individual officers in a position where all have proven themselves so meritorious. Of the Lieutenants commanding it may be said that they did their duty manfully, as men of the old line could not but have done. Our little fleet has some of the finest of that line, too. Lieutenants Jones and Johnston having been mentioned, young Lieutenant Wilburn Hall, of Georgia, who wore in action the sword presented him by the American Government for the first character and scholarship of all his date at the naval school,

and Midshipman Seals, the Executive Officer of Commodore Tattnall's flag ship, having, by their coolness and courage, given pretty strong evidence that they will some day 'possess a gazette of their own,' and being the only officers under my observation during the fight, I can do no better than to adduce their conduct as an index to that of all the other officers in the fleet.

“Respectfully, etc.,

“AN EYE-WITNESS.”

## CHAPTER THIRTEENTH.

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Attack upon the Federal vessels blockading the port of Savannah. Battery Cheves erected, and manned by the navy. Ineffectual efforts to defeat Federal operations looking to the investment of Fort Pulaski. Convoys a six months' supply of provisions to the fort. Pulaski isolated. Projected assault upon the battery on Oakley island. Congratulatory letter to Captain Buchanan on the success of the *Virginia*.

With a view to testing the range of some rifle guns lately received on the station, and to afford his men some practice, on the 26th of December, 1861, the Commodore attacked, with his flotilla, the enemy's blockading vessels then lying in the mouth of the Savannah river. Retiring before his fire, the enemy stood out to sea. After a pursuit of several miles, and having demonstrated the inefficient character of the guns, the Confederate flotilla returned to its anchorage. The Commodore's attention was now earnestly directed to the establishment of suitable defenses along the water approaches to Savannah. On a small island opposite Fort Jackson he constructed a battery which, in honor of Doctor Cheves who superintended its erection, was called *Battery Cheves*. A part of its armament consisted of some long 32-pounder ship's guns furnished by the Navy Department from the Norfolk Navy Yard upon the requisition of the Commodore. This work enfiladed the approach by the river channel, and its tenure and defense were then confided to the navy. Fire rafts were also prepared at his suggestion, and placed in the Savannah near Fort Jackson.

During the late fall and early winter of this year, the Federals commenced operations looking to the isolation and final reduction of Fort Pulaski. Possessing a numerous

fleet of gun boats,—well armed and of light draught,—they were able to ascend the inlets and creeks permeating the delta of the Savannah river, select positions for investing batteries, and cover their working parties. In the efforts to retard them in their design, the flotilla of the Commodore was active ; but the vessels composing it were inadequate to the task.

On the 28th of January, 1862, perceiving that its isolation was at hand, the General Commanding requested Commodore Tattnall to convoy a six months' supply of provisions to Fort Pulaski. To do this it was necessary to pass through a cross fire from thirteen of the enemy's vessels ;—seven of them lying in Lazaretto creek, south of the Savannah river, and six in the channel running between Turtle and Jones islands towards the Carolina shore. Although the enemy's fire was heavy, and, considering the distance, well directed, the provisions were safely thrown into the fort, and the vessels returned to Savannah without injury.

The Navy Department was at this time advised by the Commodore that the enemy, whenever so disposed, could take possession of the Savannah river in rear of Fort Pulaski. He urged forward, by every means at command, the completion of the defensive works in the vicinity of Fort Jackson. Why the Federals did not, at this epoch, advance their gun boats for the capture of Savannah appears inexplicable. It has been suggested that the presence of Commodore Tattnall and of some of the best officers of the old navy, then under his command, may have exerted no inconsiderable influence in inclining the enemy to caution. That the Federals were informed of the condition and character of the works then existent for the protection of Savannah, cannot be doubted.

The removal of the obstructions placed by the Confederates in Wall's cut,—a channel connecting New and Wright rivers,—afforded the enemy's gun-boats the means of entering the Savannah river in rear of Fort Pulaski without encountering the fire of its guns, and of covering Federal working parties employed in the erection of investing batteries at Venus' Point and on Oakley island. During the month of February the enemy maintained such a formidable force of gun-boats in and around the Savannah river, that the little Confederate flotilla was entirely prevented from reconnoitering its channel and the creeks communicating with the sound. By operating at night and keeping quiet during the day, much work had been accomplished before the precise location of these investing batteries was ascertained. Upon unmasking his works at *Venus' Point* and on Oakley island,—the one mounting eight heavy guns and the other nine,—it was apparent that the isolation of Fort Pulaski was complete, and that its reduction was simply a question of time, unless prompt relief could be afforded. The enemy was also employed in the erection of formidable batteries on Tybee island, and at other points, for the bombardment of the fort.

General Robert E. Lee,—then commanding the military department of South Carolina, Georgia, and Florida,—had an interview with Flag-officer Tattnall, in which the possibility of relieving Fort Pulaski was earnestly and carefully discussed. The Commodore expressed the opinion (in which General Lee fully concurred) that there was no way of doing so except by a successful assault upon the battery erected on Oakley island. This carried, additional men and munitions might be thrown into the fort. General Lee regarded such an attempt as entirely too hazardous. Stung

by some remarks attributed to General Lee, and repeated by some one to the Flag-officer, the latter determined to lead his entire force, in open boats, in an assault upon the battery on Oakley island. Early on the morning preceding the night upon which this assault was to be made, General Lee,—learning the Flag-officer's determination,—called at Commodore Tattnall's quarters in the city of Savannah, and expressed a desire to see Captain Tattnall of the marines, one of the Flag-officer's aids. To this officer General Lee addressed himself very warmly, and asked how he had best approach Commodore Tattnall in order to attempt to dissuade him from making an attack prompted perhaps by a wounded professional pride, and which, if unsuccessful, would leave the river approaches to the city practically open to the enemy? The aid responded: he believed the contemplated attack to be very desperate in its character; but, as it would be his duty to accompany the Flag-officer, such fact rendered it out of the question for him to take a step towards preventing its execution. Subsequently the General sent a messenger to the Flag-officer asking a confidential interview. During that interview General Lee gave distinct utterance to his fears for the fate of Savannah in the event that the attack failed of the desired result. After hearing the General, Commodore Tattnall so far modified his plans as to confess himself willing to be governed by the views of such officers of the navy and army as he should assemble and consult in council. The officers were convened; and, after due deliberation, they came to this conclusion:

“CONFEDERATE STATES STEAMER SAVANNAH,

“February 28th, 1862.

“SIR: Having been requested by you to express our opin-

ion as to the advisability of an attack by the vessels of your squadron, assisted by two hundred men of the army in boats, on the 'battery' at 'Oakley island,' we report as follows :

"The boats and vessels would be subjected to a heavy fire of 'grape' and 'cannister' at short range from the battery, supported by a cross-fire from the gun-boats and battery opposite, and we are of the opinion that the result would in all probability be a failure, attended with great loss of life and vessels. In that event, our *present* preparations for the defense of Savannah would be thrown away, and a fearfully depressing moral effect produced. Should such an expedition prove *successful*, it would result in the spiking of a few of the enemy's guns and a slight retardation in their advance, with such a loss of men and arms on our side as in the result to decrease our means of defending Savannah, which we deem the all-important object, both on shore and afloat.

"Very respectfully,

"Your obedient servants,

"J. RUTLEDGE, Lieut. Comd'g.

"J. S. KENNARD, Lieut. Comd'g.

"J. PEMBROKE JONES, Lieut. Comd'g.

"O. F. JOHNSTON, Lieut. Comd'g.

"WM. P. A. CAMPBELL, Lieut. Comd'g.

"PHILIP PORCHER, Lieut. Comd'g.

"EDWARD C. ANDERSON, Major Artillery."

"To Flag-officer Josiah Tattnall,

"Commanding Naval Forces,

"Georgia and South Carolina."

The contemplated attack was consequently relinquished. This was the only occasion during the war when the Com-

modore suffered himself to be swerved a hair's breadth from the path of duty as pointed out by his professional judgment and matured experience. He was moved to this departure because his professional pride had been wounded by some remarks erroneously attributed to a soldier and a gentleman for whom he entertained the highest esteem, and with whom he was then coöperating in the defense of Savannah.

Had the attack been made, it would probably have resulted disastrously, for several of the Federal gun-boats remained in supporting distance of the battery on Oakley island.

By the 17th of March, through the combined efforts of the commanders of the naval and land forces, the river approaches to Savannah were rendered secure against a dash from the enemy.

Upon earliest receipt of the intelligence of the brilliant and remarkable exploit of Flag-officer Buchanan, off Newport News, in the Confederate iron-clad *Virginia*, Flag-officer Tattnall penned this letter of congratulation, in every line of which are eloquently expressed love of country, joy at the success of a life-long friend,—his junior in rank,—pride in the navy, admiration of valor, and genuine nobility of soul:

“SAVANNAH, GA., 12th March, 1862.

“MY DEAR BUCHANAN :

“The reports from Norfolk have kept us in a state of hopeful, but painful anxiety in regard to your unexampled combat off Newport News, until the accounts of last evening reported the result and the return of the ships to Norfolk. I congratulate you, my dear friend, with all my heart



and soul, on the glory you have gained for the Confederacy and yourself. The whole affair is unexampled, and will carry your name to every corner of the Christian world and be on the tongue of every man that deals in salt water. That which I admire most in the whole affair is the bold confidence with which you undertook an untried thing. To have faltered, or to have doubted, might have been fatal; but you proved yourself (as the old navy always esteemed you) a man not of doubt or faltering when you had undertaken an adventure. If your wound be severe I shall regret it, but if it be not so, your friends will not find fault, as it crowns your worth.

“I hope that Congress will make you an Admiral and put you at the head of the navy. You have my vote for it from my very heart, and I am sure that all your seniors will cry ‘Amen.’ You don’t know how much you have aided in removing the gloom which recent military events had cast over us. Do let some friend at your bedside write me one line to tell me the nature of your wound. God bless you, my dear Buchanan.

“Your friend, very truly,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL.”

“P. S.—The enemy have cut us off from Fort Pulaski, but the fort is well supplied with provisions, etc., and is in excellent condition.”

“Flag-officer Franklin Buchanan, C. S. N.”

It is while listening to a message like this,—intended only for the ear of a friend,—that we catch a glimpse of the inner life of Commodore Tattnall and learn to appreciate more surely his exalted manhood, generosity, and nobleness of heart. As an utterance from the grave it enforces deep attention, and perpetuates the virtues of the old hero sleeping so quietly beneath the moss-clad oaks of Bonaventure.

## CHAPTER FOURTEENTH.

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Ordered to take command of the naval defenses of the waters of Virginia, and to hoist his flag on board the *Virginia*. Official communications in regard to the condition of the *Virginia*, and showing the expectations entertained of her future service. Offers battle to the Monitor. Official report to the Secretary of the Navy. Embarrassing position of Flag-officer Tattnall. Letter to General Joseph E. Johnston. Communication to Mr. Mallory requesting to be relieved of command if the navy was to be regarded as under the control of the military. Confederate army withdrawn from the Peninsula. Norfolk abandoned. The *Virginia* destroyed. Letter of Flag-officer Tattnall to Secretary Mallory detailing the necessity for, and the circumstances attendant upon the act.

Flag-officer Buchanan being disabled by wounds received during the recent naval engagement in Hampton Roads, in which he had displayed such conspicuous gallantry and secured for the Confederacy a victory so illustrious that its fame, trumpet-tongued, encompassed the civilized world, quite unexpectedly to himself, and wholly unsought, the following orders were received by Flag-officer Tattnall:

“CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,

“NAVY DEPARTMENT,

“RICHMOND, March 25th, 1862.

“Flag-officer JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Commanding Naval Defenses, Etc.,

“Navy Yard, Norfolk, Va.:

“SIR: You will take command of the naval defenses of the waters of Virginia and hoist your flag on board the *Virginia*. The following vessels for the present are under

your command: *Patrick Henry, Jamestown, Raleigh, Beaufort, and Teazer.*

“The results of the recent naval engagement in Hampton Roads demonstrated the offensive and defensive power of the *Virginia*. To an officer of your experience the Department refrains from giving any specific instructions as to the employment of the *Virginia*, beyond the general instruction that she is to be made as destructive to the enemy as possible.

“Herewith you have a copy of the letter addressed by the Department to Flag-officer Buchanan when he assumed command of the squadron now placed under your command.

“I am, respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“S. R. MALLORY,

“Secretary of the Navy.”

“CONFEDERATE STATES,

“NAVY DEPARTMENT,

“RICHMOND, February 24th, 1862.

“Flag-officer FRANKLIN BUCHANAN,

“Navy Yard, Norfolk, Va. :

“SIR: You are hereby detached from the office of Orders and Detail, and will proceed to Norfolk and report to Flag-officer Forrest for the command of the naval defenses of the James river.

“You will hoist your flag on the *Virginia*, or any other vessel of your squadron, which will, for the present, embrace the *Virginia, Patrick Henry, Jamestown, Teazer, Raleigh, and Beaufort.*

“The *Virginia* is a novelty in naval construction, is un-

tried and her powers unknown; and hence the Department will not give specific orders as to her attack upon the enemy. Her powers as a ram are regarded as very formidable, and it is hoped that you will be able to test them. Like the bayonet charge of infantry, this mode of attack, while the most destructive, will commend itself to you in the present scarcity of ammunition. It is one also that may be rendered destructive at night against the enemy at anchor. Even without guns the ship would, it is believed, be formidable as a ram.

“Could you pass Old Point and make a dashing cruize in the Potomac as far as Washington, its effect upon the public mind would be important to our cause.

“The condition of our country, and the painful reverses we have just suffered, demand our utmost exertions; and, convinced as I am that the opportunity and the means for striking a decisive blow for our navy are now for the first time presented, I congratulate you upon it, and know that your judgment and gallantry will meet all just expectations.

“Action, prompt and successful action now, would be of serious importance to our cause, and with my earnest wishes for success, and for the happiness of yourself, officers, and crew,

“I am, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

“S. R. MALLORY,

“Secretary of the Navy.”

Responding at once to the order, Commodore Tattnall proceeded to Norfolk, and, on the 29th of March, 1862, took command of the squadron consisting of the iron-clad *Virginia* and the wooden gun-boats *Patrick Henry*, *Jamestown*, *Raleigh*, *Beaufort*, and *Teazer*. These gun-boats were small vessels, originally built for commercial purposes, with their

engines exposed to the direct effect of shot, and illy-adapted to the uses of war. They were capable, nevertheless, of rendering good service under fire. Upon the enemy they inflicted much injury, and gained for their commanders no inconsiderable distinction.

To carry out these instructions of the Navy Department, after their obedience by Flag-officer Buchanan and his demonstration of the character and power of the *Virginia*, was an affair quite different from what it at first was. When that gallant officer steamed down in the *Virginia* to attack the *Congress* and the *Cumberland* off Newport News, the enemy regarded him as courting either destruction or repulse. The power developed by the *Virginia* was a complete and an alarming surprise. After the destruction of the *Congress* and the *Cumberland*, and the drawn action with the Monitor, the Federals never permitted the *Virginia* to approach within a mile of their vessels. The speed of their ships was so superior to that of the *Virginia*, that there was no way of bringing them to close quarters. Like burnt children they dreaded the fire.

On the first of April the Secretary of the Navy addressed to Commodore Tattnall a communication giving information touching some peculiarities in the construction of the Federal Monitor,—then lying in Hampton Roads,—which suggested to him the idea of boarding her from the other vessels of his squadron while engaging her with the *Virginia*. That communication read as follows :

“CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,

“NAVY DEPARTMENT,

“RICHMOND, April 1st, 1862.

“Flag-officer JOSIAH TATTNALL, C. S. N.,

“Commanding Naval Defenses James River :

"SIR: The inclosed note, sent to me by a friend from Baltimore, will inform you of some interesting points about the Monitor. This vessel has achieved a high reputation by her recent combat with the *Virginia*; and the enemy, no less than our own people, look forward to a renewal of it as a matter of course, and with very deep interest. I confess to a very deep interest in your success over her, for I am fully convinced that the results of such a victory may save millions of money, and perhaps thousands of lives; and hence I cannot avoid communicating to you matters relating to the Monitor, which, perhaps, may have but little influence in determining the mode of assailing her.

"The *Scientific American*, in a recent number, publishes a neat wood cut of the vessel, and gives some data of her construction. She has, I perceive, forward, two four-sided ventilators, about three feet diameter and three feet high, which, it is alleged, slide down even with the deck when in action. But little preparation to resist boarders exists, it would seem; and a wet sail thrown over her pilot-house would effectually close the steersman's eyes. Her grated turret, her smoke stack, ventilators, and air holes invite attacks with inflammables or combustibles; and it would seem that twenty men thus provided, once upon her deck, as her turret is but nine feet high, might drive every man out of her.

*You* "We will leave with your ship and fleet to attack the enemy when, in your judgment, it may seem best, and I need not add that I have every confidence that you will accomplish all that any man with such means can.

"Please telegraph me when you will probably leave; and to avoid the leaky telegraph, you can say 'Captain Smith will leave here on — at — o'clock.' Good, fearless pilots are

all important, and I suggest that before you sail, you confront them with the chart. Their refusal to place the *Virginia* closer than one mile to the *Minnesota*, notwithstanding Buchanan's earnest appeals, induces me to say this.

"With my earnest prayers for your success and the glory of our flag, and the safety of yourself and companions,

"I am, very respectfully,

"Your obedient servant,

"S. R. MALLORY,

"Secretary of the Navy."

In his communication of the 4th instant, the Secretary of the Navy informed Flag-officer Tattnall that the enemy was represented as being about to move in large force, and that many transports were congregated at Fortress Monroe. He was requested to penetrate and defeat his designs. "Do not hesitate," continues the dispatch, "or wait for orders, but strike when, how, and where your judgment may dictate. Take her (the *Virginia*) out of dock when you deem best, and this point is left entirely to your decision."

Three days previously Major-General Magruder had complained to the Government that the *Virginia* had not prevented a certain movement of the enemy in the direction of Newport News. A copy of this complaint was forwarded to Flag-officer Tattnall. The answer was patent. At the time indicated the *Virginia* was in the dry-dock, undergoing repairs and being strengthened in obedience to express orders received from the Navy Department. Consequently she could not have appeared at the point specified.

While the *Virginia* was coming out of the dry-dock the Commodore penned this dispatch to the Secretary of the Navy:

“FLAG-OFFICER’S OFFICE, DOCK YARD,  
“GOSPORT, VA., 4th April, 1862,  
“ONE O’CLOCK P. M.

“SIR: The *Virginia* is at this moment going out of dock, and I shall drop down into the Roads to-morrow and act against the enemy according to circumstances. I shall take with me all the steamers of the squadron.

“The *Virginia* is, as Captain Lee informed you, in better condition than when she first left the yard, so far as that her ~~beam~~<sup>gun</sup> is said to be better secured, and that another layer of iron has been partially put on her, but I regret that we could not fit the remainder of the iron covers for the ports, or render, for want of time, four of the six, originally fitted, available in action. The ability to close our ports while loading would be (particularly in close action with the Monitor) of great advantage; for if it be found that both vessels are impenetrable to shot, the contest will be narrowed to the dismounting of guns, and while ours will be exposed the whole time, hers will be exposed but about one-sixth of the time. She fires each gun once in a minute and a half, and after it is run out it will not take longer, at close quarters, than a quarter of a minute to sight and fire it.

“I consulted Commodore Buchanan, as you suggested, and he advised me, in the most earnest and decided tone, not to engage the Monitor without the port covers having been fitted. He stated that two of the *Virginia*’s guns had been disabled, and that a third (the bow gun) would have been disabled also but for its port cover, which shows indentations by two cannon shot. He added that, with two exceptions, all his loss in men was by shots through the ports. He also said that on the return of the ship to



Norfolk he sent Lieutenant Catesby Jones to Richmond to call your attention to the importance of the port covers.

“The opinion of Lieutenant Jones coincides with that of the Commodore.

“Should we have occasion to attempt the passage of Fortress Monroe, the port covers will be absolutely necessary to protect the guns from being dismounted, and the ship herself from the effect of shells passing through the ports. I have, therefore, requested Captain Lee to continue the fitting of the port covers in my absence.

“The urgent necessity for getting the *Virginia* in the presence of the enemy as soon as possible, suggested in your letters of the 3d and 4th instants, determined me yesterday morning to request Captain Lee to take the ship out of dock at the earliest opportunity; and, as I said, she is going out at this moment.

“I presume that our first antagonist will be the Monitor, and all our endeavors will be exerted to meet her successfully.

“I have carefully considered your letter with the one from your friend in Baltimore.

“The plan of boarding and stopping the ventilators had already occurred to us, but the idea of blinding the helmsman had not, and shall be adopted.

“I leave Norfolk by to-morrow’s tide and shall endeavor to deserve success if we do not obtain it.

“I am, sir, with great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Flag-officer Commanding, Etc.”

“The Honorable S. R. Mallory,

“Secretary of the Navy.”

The next day the Commodore received the following communication from the Chief-Engineer of the *Virginia*:

“C. S. STEAMER VIRGINIA,  
“OFF NORFOLK, April 5, 1862.

“SIR: From my past and present experience with the engines of this vessel, I am of the opinion that they cannot be relied upon. During a cruise of two years, whilst I was attached to this ship in the United States service, they were continually breaking down, at times when least expected, and the ship had to be sailed under canvas during the greater part of the cruise. When she returned, the Chief-Engineer reported that all experiments to improve their working and reliability had failed, and, as the defects were radical, embracing the entire engines, recommended that they should be removed from the vessel; and such was the intention of the United States Government before she fell into our hands.

“The engines gave out yesterday, as I had occasion to report to you, after running only a few hours, and, as I cannot insure their working any length of time consecutively, I deem it my duty to make this report.

“At the time I was ordered to the vessel I was informed that it was not the intention to take the ship where a delay occasioned by a derangement in the machinery would endanger her safety, and that she would always be accessible to the Navy Yard for repairs; this is the reason why I have deferred making this report until this time, and I also was under the impression that the Navy Department was aware of the defective nature of the *machinery*, and her movements would be directed with a reference to this.

“Each time that we have gone down, I have had to make

repairs which could not have been done aboard ship very well, or if done at all would have required a great deal of time.

“I am, sir, very respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“H. ASHTON RAMSEY,

“Chief Engineer.”

“Flag-officer Josiah Tattnall,

“Commanding C. S. Naval Forces,

“Waters of Virginia.”

This was supplemented by a report from Engineer Ramsey,—addressed to Lieutenant Jones, Executive Officer of the *Virginia*,—which reads as follows :

“C. S. STEAMER VIRGINIA.

“SIR: The engines of this ship are not disconnected, and one cannot be worked alone. As long as the vacuum of the forward engine holds good, the engines might be run by working the after engine high-pressure, but as the vacuum of either engine is at all times precarious, and if the vacuum of the forward engine should fall, the engines would stop. Using one engine high-pressure would also require a great deal of steam, which the boilers cannot generate for any length of time.

“The air pump valves are now being overhauled, and, unless there is something more serious than I now anticipate, I hope to be ready by night.

“Respectfully,

“H. ASHTON RAMSEY.”

“Lieutenant Jones, Executive Officer.”

These reports confirmed the information which the Commodore had previously acquired touching the unreliability

of the *Virginia's* engines. Their peculiar construction, taken in connection with the great draft of the vessel,—twenty-two feet,—and her length,—three hundred and twelve feet,—rendered her management in narrow channels and in the presence of the enemy a very difficult matter.

Of the defective character of the engines and his inability to put them in proper condition the Department was duly advised.

The immediate intentions of the Commodore were conveyed in this dispatch to Mr. Mallory :

“NORFOLK, VA., 10th April, 1862.

“SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your confidential letter of yesterday's date. The plan I propose is to attack the enemy's transports lying above the forts near Hampton creek, in doing which the pilots tell me that I shall be three-quarters of a mile from the transports and one and a half from the forts. These transports consist of small vessels of light draft.

“The Monitor is off Hampton creek and will doubtless engage this ship. I shall not notice her until she closes with me, but direct my fire on the transports. There must be, however, a combat with the Monitor.

“I presume that so long as the Monitor is efficient it will not do to run the gauntlet of the forts, as she might, in my absence, run up to Norfolk and destroy the yard.

“Without reference to the Monitor, however, I think it more than doubtful whether the passage of the forts could be effected by the *Virginia* at present, for the reason I have already stated to you, the want of port covers to protect the guns and the interior of the ship. In passing such formidable batteries it will be wonderful if a gun be left serviceable.

“I have been aware from the first that my command is dangerous to my reputation, from the expectations of the public founded on the success of Commodore Buchanan, and I have looked to a different field from his to satisfy them. I shall never find in Hampton Roads the opportunity my gallant friend found.

“I see no chance for me but to pass the forts and strike elsewhere, and I shall be gratified by your authority to do so as soon as the ship shall be in a suitable condition.

“If the presence of the *Virginia* at Yorktown be deemed at Richmond of such paramount importance as to call for the passage of the forts at all hazards, I will, on hearing from you by telegraph to that effect, at once attempt it.

“It still blows hard from the northeast, with thick weather, which detains me at my anchors. I hope that more of the enemy’s transports have been obliged to seek shelter above the forts.

“I am, sir, with great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Flag-officer Commanding, Etc.”

“The Honorable S. R. Mallory, Sec’y of the Navy.”

Early on the morning of the 11th he went down the Roads in the *Virginia*, accompanied by several of the gun-boats, with the design of engaging the enemy to the fullest extent. The Federals, however, although in superior force, could not be prevailed upon to accept the offer of battle. Commodore Tattnall had determined to attack the Monitor with the *Virginia*. While thus engaged, she was to be mobbed by the Confederate gun-boats, the crews of which had been told off for this purpose, and divided each into three parties. Numbers one in each vessel were charged with covering the

ventilators, having previously ignited and thrown into them suffocating combustible materials. Numbers two were to wedge the turret, while numbers three were ordered to blind the helmsman by covering the pilot house. This plan was based upon secret and accurate information acquired in regard to the peculiar construction of the Monitor. Commodore Tattnall expected that probably half of his gun-boats would be sunk or crippled in the attempt, but he was quite sanguine of throwing on the Monitor's deck a number of men sufficient to ensure her capture. There could be neither hesitation nor confusion in the action of the crews, as each crew was, as we have indicated, divided into three parties, each having its own duty to perform, and each designated by a particular badge known to and recognized by all. This daring resolve was frustrated by the refusal of the enemy to close in with the offer of battle.

In order to provoke the enemy into an engagement, Commodore Tattnall ordered two of his gun-boats to run into the transport anchorage and cut out such of the vessels as were lying nearest the *Virginia*. This was successfully done within sight and almost within gun-shot of the Monitor, but she could not be drawn into an engagement.

The events of the day are narrated in the following official communication to the Secretary of the Navy:

“FLAG SHIP VIRGINIA, OFF SEWELL'S POINT,

“12th April, 1862.

“SIR: I had the honor to address you yesterday by telegraph in regard to the movements of the *Virginia* on that day.

“I have now to inform you more particularly that, the weather having cleared up, I left the anchorage off Norfolk at 6 A. M. and dropped down to Hampton Roads, within long

range of the enemy's batteries, which fired several shots at us, but without effect.

"Their steamer Monitor was lying close under the protection of the batteries. The flag-ship *Minnesota*, with a large number of men-of-war and merchant vessels, was lying below the forts. A few of the latter, lying above the forts, on our approach retired to the squadron below. Signal guns were, at the same time, fired by the squadron. Several of the men-of-war, including the Monitor, got up steam, and I thought it to be their intention to engage me, but they suffered me to hold my position until late in the afternoon without doing so.

"Observing three merchant vessels within the bar of Hampton, I directed Lieutenant Commandant Barney, in the *Jamestown*, to capture them if he found they could be approached without too much risk.

"This was very promptly and creditably accomplished; and the vessels were towed out with the assistance of the steamer *Raleigh*, Lieutenant Commandant Alexander, who followed the *Jamestown* in for the latter purpose.

"They proved to be the brig *Marcus*, of Stockton, New Jersey; brig *Saboah*, of Providence, and schooner *Catherine T. Dix*, of Accomac. One of the brigs was loaded with hay; the two others were in ballast. A part of their crews, to the number of thirteen, were captured.

"The capture of these vessels almost within gun shot of the Monitor did not affect her movements.

"The prisoners were examined separately, but the only information received, in which they all concurred, was that the steamer *Vanderbilt* was with the enemy's fleet below, and that she had been fitted with a ram, very low down on her stem, for the purpose of attacking the *Virginia*.

"They were mistaken in her being present, for late in the afternoon she joined the fleet from sea.

"This steamer, as powerful in her lower frame as the *Virginia*, was known to be fitting at New York for the purpose of aiding the Monitor, and I have reason to think that others of the enemy's steamers, now below, are prepared to do the same.

"The enclosed paragraph from a Northern paper, found on board of one of the prizes, refers to this.

"I have reason to think, also, that obstructions have been placed in the channel between Fortress Monroe and the Rip Raps. It is observed that the enemy's large ships pass the posts very near to Fortress Monroe, thus avoiding the mid channel.

"This morning I left Craney Island and moored to the buoy off Sewell's Point in sight of the enemy's ships.

"I shall act with proper prudence, for with the *Virginia* at the mouth of James river the enemy's operations in that direction may be checked, which will aid the plans of General Magruder, as I understand them. I shall take especial care not to be cut off from Norfolk.

"The enemy's plan, obviously, will be to get me in close conflict with the Monitor, and as in that event I must occasionally lose my headway entirely, to seize the opportunity to run into me with the *Vanderbilt* and other vessels, which for that purpose will keep out of the melee.

"The alterations, it is thought, have decreased the speed of the *Virginia* one mile the hour.

"I have the honor to be, with great respect,

"Your obedient servant,

"JOSIAH TATTNALL,

"Flag-officer Commanding, Etc."

"The Honorable S. R. Mallory, Sec'y of the Navy."



The connection of Commodore Tattnall with the *Virginia* was peculiarly trying. Called to her command just after Commodore Buchanan's splendid victory, it was confidently expected by the public that this *iron diadem of the South*, as she was called, would perform wonders. Nothing was deemed too extraordinary for her achievement. All things were regarded as possible. It was even supposed by the multitude that she could at any moment pass unharmed the powerful batteries of Fortress Monroe, annihilate opposing fleets, bombard New York, or compass any other exploit within the purpose of her commander. Her presence at any point of perplexity was deemed sufficient for the solution of every military difficulty, and the frustration of all plans of the enemy. She was said to be worth an army of fifty thousand men to the Confederacy, and was an object of pride, affection, and adoration. Nor was this estimate wholly excessive in view of what had already been done and what was still being accomplished by her presence. She protected Norfolk, the Navy Yard, and the James river. From Cape Henry to the upper James,—as far as she could ascend,—no fleet of transports could safely land troops to assail those places. She had annihilated the land and water blockade at Newport News, passed the control of the James into Confederate hands, and was the protection of the right flank of our army on the Peninsula.\*

Nevertheless, the authorities and the nation clamored for something more. Precisely what, they knew not, but something grand they must have. Because they were not astounded by some novel and herculean achievement, people began to murmur, and came to attribute the lack of further brilliant adventure not to a want of capacity in the ship,

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\* See Pollard's *Second Year of the War*, p. 27. Richmond, 1863.

not to the absence of opportunity, but to non-action on the part of the commander. They lost sight of the true mission of this vessel. They knew not the defects inherent in her engines. They appreciated not the fact that the enemy,—warned by the first deadly encounter,—avoided her approach and declined her challenge to combat. It cannot be denied that in his operations with this ship Commodore Tattnall was harrassed by these public expectations which were entirely unreasonable, and by constant *nagging* by the Navy Department which seemed hardly aware of what it expected to be done, and yet desired possibilities and impossibilities accomplished without loss of the vessel,—which, time and again, intimated desires, and yet would issue no positive orders for their accomplishment. The fact is, the Department practically avoided all responsibility, and yet expected the Flag-officer to perform nautical prodigies. It was no easy matter for Commodore Tattnall, under the circumstances, to preserve an even temper, and pursue such unruffled course as the exigencies of the service demanded.

To General Joseph E. Johnston, who had addressed him a communication requesting him, if practicable, to pass Fortress Monroe, avoid the Federal fleet just below, and proceed to the York river for the purpose of destroying the enemy's transports, Commodore Tattnall replied :

“NORFOLK, VA., April 30th, 1862.

“GENERAL :

“I had the honor to receive your letter of the 28th instant as the *Virginia* was on the point of dropping down to Hampton Roads, and deferred the movement until I could consult competent pilots and others as to the possibility of running the *Virginia* by the forts and to the position occupied by the enemy's fleet at the mouth of the Poquosin.

“I enclose you a copy of the opinion of the two pilots of the ship, which, condensed, is that on a day clear enough for the land to be seen there would be no difficulty in reaching York river, but that at night it could not be undertaken with a reasonable prospect of success. This would, of course, oblige me to pass the forts by day-light, after which I should have to contend with the squadron of men-of-war below the forts, which is large, and includes the *Minnesota*, the iron-clad steamers *Monitor*, *Saugatuck*, and *Galena*, and the powerful steamer *Vanderbilt*, fitted with a ram expressly to attack the *Virginia*.

“Should I pass the forts and ships, the latter (their steam is always up) would follow me, and those of lighter draft than sixteen feet, taking a much shorter route, would reach the Poquosin long before me, while the larger vessels taking the same route as the *Virginia* (having much greater speed) would also reach the river before her, if they declined engaging her on the route.

“On reaching the Poquosin, if the pilots be right, I should find the enemy’s transports out of my reach, and thus, at a great hazard and without deriving any advantage, abandon the defense of Norfolk and the moral effect produced by the presence of the *Virginia* on the enemy’s operations in the James river.

“I am, General, with great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL.”

“General Joseph E. Johnston,

“Commanding Military Department.”

It must be borne in mind that the speed of the *Virginia* was only six miles an hour, while the slowest of the enemy’s

steamers was capable of moving at the rate of nine miles. The reasons presented in opposition to the suggestion of General Johnston were conclusive.

About this time Commodore Tattnall received a dispatch from Captain Tucker,—his second in command, then in charge of the gun-boats detailed for special service in the James river and coöperating with the land forces under Major-General J. Bankhead Magruder,—enclosing an order signed by the Adjutant-General of General Robert E. Lee, in which it was assumed that the Flag-officer was subordinate to General Lee and amenable to his orders. Against this procedure Commodore Tattnall instantly entered his protest, and called upon the Government,—in the event that the unheard of proceeding should meet with its sanction,—to relieve him from further duty. Here is the letter, and it is entirely characteristic of the highstrung, brave officer who bore upon his shoulders the honors of half a century wrested from the four-quarters of the seas :

“GOSPORT NAVY YARD,  
“April 29th, 1862.

“HONORABLE S. R. MALLORY,

“Secretary of the Navy, Richmond, Va. :

“SIR: I have the honor herewith to forward you the copy of a letter from the Adjutant of General Lee to Commander Tucker, of the *Patrick Henry*, now acting under my orders in the James river.

“This order, if sustained by the Department, assumes the control of a portion of my command, and seems to confirm a report prevalent here that myself and command are considered subject to the orders of General Johnston.

“This would place me, with reference to the army, in a

position never held hitherto by an officer of my rank in any naval service, and which all their reports show is not the position of the naval commanders, my opponents, in the service of the United States.

“These are times, Mr. Mallory, for frankness, and without it discord between the two arms, produced by misconception, may be fatal.

“If, therefore, I am to be placed under the command of an army officer, and, being a seaman, am to hold my action and reputation subject to the judgment of a landsman, who can know nothing of the complicated nature of naval service, I earnestly solicit to be promptly relieved from my command. Some younger man, whose back-bone is more supple than fifty years of naval pride have made mine, can be found, I hope (for the sake of harmony), to take my place and carry out the views of the Government.

“I am, sir, with great respect,

“Your obedient, servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Flag-officer Commanding.

Previous to this, Commodore Tattnell had, in a lengthy communication, which we now introduce, fully answered the suggestions of the War Department in respect to the movements of the *Virginia*:

“FLAG SHIP VIRGINIA, 21st April, 1862.

“SIR: I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 18th instant.

“I informed you, under date of the 19th instant, that anticipating the wishes of General Magruder, I had dispatched to the James river the steamers *Jamestown* and *Raleigh*.

“I presume that they passed Newport News in safety, as no firing was heard at that point, and I have heard nothing of them since. They were followed yesterday by the *Patrick Henry*, Commander Tucker, who, I think, must have passed the forts last night, as the weather was favorable. The *Beaufort* will leave to-night for the same destination, unless her services should be required on the canal,—the enemy having made a demonstration in that direction. I have tendered her to General Huger, but he thinks that he will not need her.

“The squadron in the river will then consist of the *Patrick Henry*, *Jamestown*, *Raleigh*, *Beaufort*, and *Teazer*; that is, of all the vessels of my command, excepting the *Virginia* which, owing to her draft of water, cannot ascend the river further than four miles above Newport News, and therefore can be of no direct aid to General Magruder in the neighborhood of Warwick river.

“You express surprise that the enemy’s vessels should have attempted to ascend the James river as far as the Warwick.

“The enemy’s vessels of light draft can go from Fortress Monroe to Newport News, a distance of but six miles, with perfect impunity.

“On examining the chart of Hampton Roads you will find that from nine to ten feet of water can be carried near the land, and inside of Hampton bar, from Fortress Monroe to Newport News (the mouth of James river). By this route the enemy’s gun-boats and vessels of light draft can pass into the James river without hindrance from the *Virginia*, unless the latter be placed permanently at Newport News. This would close the navigation entirely, but would enable the enemy’s fleet, by a sudden movement in Hampton

Roads, to cut her off from Norfolk and force her into a decisive contest with an overwhelming force. I am satisfied that their object in not accepting the challenge of the *Virginia* on her late trip to the Roads was to draw the latter to Newport News either with this view, or to entangle her in obstructions, which I have reason to believe they have placed there.

“I beg, therefore, to prevent misconceptions, that it may be distinctly understood by the War Department, that I cannot prevent the enemy’s gun-boats or light draft transports from entering and ascending the James river, or their army crossing it, excepting so far as the force of steamers I have placed in the river may prevent it. On this, however, I have but little reliance, as the enemy can at any time send a force so superior as to compel them to retire up the river behind our forts. I am of the opinion, therefore, that these steamers would have been of more service here in occasionally making a dash at night across the Roads into the channel I have referred to between Fortress Monroe and Newport News for the purpose of intercepting vessels, but in view of the consequences which must follow the crossing of Warwick river, as suggested by General Magruder and quoted in your letter to me of the 18th instant, I felt called upon to furnish the General all the aid in my power.

“I think from General Lee’s endorsement of your letter to the Secretary of War of the 16th instant, and from the enemy’s fleet having been generally reported to be in *Hampton Roads*, that there is a great and widely prevailing error on this point. The enemy’s great fleet of war vessels and transports, with a few exceptions, is not in Hampton Roads, but in Chesapeake Bay, below the forts, so that to reach them I must pass the forts.

“The exceptions consist of some small transports, (steam and sail), the Monitor, and one or two gun-boats, which are under the guns of the forts and not assailable by the *Merimac* without engaging the forts. In case of such an attempt, the transports would retire below the forts as they did when the *Virginia* approached them on the 11th instant.

“I suggest, therefore, that the War Department be given to understand that they must make no calculations on my ‘damaging the enemy’s transports’ or ‘destroying his means of communication’ in Hampton Roads, although I shall not fail to do so should the opportunity offer.

“The suggestion of General Lee to turn my attention to York Town, after the performance of certain services in Hampton Roads, involves, of course, the abandonment of Norfolk and the risk of losing the ship by attempting the passage of the fort in her present unprepared condition. The enemy having had time, is undoubtedly fully prepared for the latter attempt, and I have from the best authority (a French officer of rank) that obstructions of some kind have been placed in the channel, probably in the centre, and from thence to the Rip Raps, so as to compel me, if made aware of them, to pass close to the guns of Fortress Monroe.

“When the ship is fully prepared with the covers for her ports, I shall have great hopes of passing the forts successfully, but the attempt should not be made but for a sufficient object.

“I am, sir, with great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Flag-officer Commanding, Etc.”

“The Honorable S. R. Mallory,

“Secretary of the Navy.”



It will be remembered that the *Virginia* drew between twenty-two and twenty-three feet of water, and could be successfully navigated and manœuvred only in wide, deep channels. Ten feet would express the average draft of the enemy's gun-boats and monitors. Possessing approved charts of Hampton Roads and its adjacent waters, the Navy and War Departments ought to have known that the expectations formed and expressed of what the *Virginia* should accomplish, were simply idle. It is perhaps not surprising that Generals in the field should have lacked knowledge on the subject; and it was entirely proper in them, through the Department, to invoke the aid of the navy to the fullest extent.

The hour having arrived, in the judgment of General Johnston, for a retrograde movement which would transfer the army from its present position to the line of the Chickahominy, the withdrawal was successfully accomplished by the admirable strategy of that able commander. Thus was the Peninsula abandoned to the enemy. The surrender of Norfolk, with its Navy Yard and dock, followed as a matter of consequence. There being no other alternative, under the order of Commodore Tattnall, the *Virginia* was totally destroyed on the morning of the 11th of May, 1862, in the vicinity of Craney Island.

The circumstances under which this important act was committed, are fully detailed in the accompanying letter addressed to the Secretary of the Navy :

“RICHMOND, VA., May 14th, 1862.

“SIR : In detailing to you the circumstances which caused the destruction of the Confederate States steamer *Virginia*, and her movements a few days previous to that event, I begin with your telegraphic dispatches to me of the 4th

and 5th instants, directing me to take such a position in the James river as would entirely prevent the enemy's ascending it.

“General Huger, commanding at Norfolk, on learning that I had received this order, called on me and declared that its execution would oblige him to abandon immediately his forts on *Craney Island* and *Sewell's Point* and their guns to the enemy. I informed him that as the order was imperative, I must execute it, but suggested that he should telegraph you and state the consequences. He did so; and, on the 6th instant, you telegraphed me to endeavor to afford protection to Norfolk as well as the James river, which replaced me in my original position. I then arranged with the General that he should notify me when his preparations for the evacuation of Norfolk were sufficiently advanced to enable me to act independently. On the 7th instant Commodore Hollins reached Norfolk with orders from you to consult with me and such officers as I might select in regard to the best disposition to be made of the *Virginia* under the present aspect of things.

“We had arranged the conference for the next day, the 8th, but on that day, before the hour appointed, the enemy attacked the *Sewell's Point* battery, and I left immediately with the *Virginia* to defend it.

“We found six of the enemy's vessels, including the iron-clad steamers *Monitor* and *Nangatuck*, shelling the battery. We passed the battery and stood directly for the enemy for the purpose of engaging him, and I thought an action certain, particularly as the *Minnesota* and *Vanderbilt*, which were anchored below *Fortress Monroe*, got underway and stood up to that point, apparently with the intention of joining their squadron in the roads. Before, however, we

got within gun shot, the enemy ceased firing and retired with all speed under the protection of the guns of the Fortress, followed by the *Virginia*, until the shells from the Rip Raps passed over her.

“The *Virginia* was then placed at her moorings near Sewell’s Point, and I returned to Norfolk to hold the conference referred to.

“It was held on the 9th, and the officers present were Colonel Anderson and Captain ——, of the army, selected by General Huger, who was too unwell to attend himself, and, of the navy, myself, Commodore Hollins, Captains Sterrett and Lee, Commander Richard L. Page, and Lieutenants Ap Catesby Jones and J. Pembroke Jones.

“The opinion was unanimous that the *Virginia* was then employed to the best advantage, and that she should continue, for the present, to protect Norfolk, and thus afford time to remove the public property.

“On the next day, at 10 o’clock A. M., we observed from the *Virginia* that the flag was not flying on the Sewell’s Point battery, and that it appeared to have been abandoned. I dispatched Lieutenant J. P. Jones, the Flag-Lieutenant, to Craney Island, and he there learned that a large force of the enemy had landed on the bay shore, and was marching rapidly on Norfolk; that the Sewell’s Point battery was abandoned, and our troops were retreating. I then dispatched the same officer to Norfolk to confer with General Huger and Captain Lee. He found the Navy Yard in flames, and that all its officers had left by railroad. On reaching Norfolk, he found that General Huger and all the other officers of the army had also left, that the enemy was within half a mile of the city, and that the Mayor was treating for its surrender.

“On returning to the ship he found that Craney Island and all the other batteries on the river had been abandoned.

“It was now seven o'clock in the evening, and this unexpected information rendered prompt measures necessary for the safety of the *Virginia*.

“The pilots had assured me that they could take the ship, with a draft of eighteen feet, to within forty miles of Richmond.

“This, the chief pilot,—Mr. Parrish,—and his chief assistant,—Mr. Wright,—had asserted, again and again; and on the afternoon of the 7th, in my cabin, in the presence of Commodore Hollins and Captain Sterrett, in reply to a question of mine, they both emphatically declared their ability to do so.

“Confiding in these assurances, and after consulting with the First and Flag-lieutenants, and learning that the officers generally thought it the most judicious course, I determined to lighten the ship at once and run up the river for the protection of Richmond.

“All hands having been called on deck, I stated to them the condition of things, and my hope that by getting up the river before the enemy could be made aware of our design we might capture his vessels which had ascended it, and render efficient aid in the defense of Richmond, but that, to effect this, would require all their energy in lightening the ship. They replied with three cheers, and went to work at once.

“The pilots were on deck and heard this address to the crew.

“Being quite unwell, I had retired to bed. Between one and two o'clock in the morning the First Lieutenant reported to me that after the crew had worked for five or

six hours and lifted the ship so as to render her unfit for action, the pilots had declared their inability to carry eighteen feet above the Jamestown flats, up to which point the shore, on each side, was occupied by the enemy.

“On demanding from the chief pilot,—Mr. Parrish,—an explanation of this palpable deception, he replied that eighteen feet could be carried after the prevalence of easterly winds, but that the wind for the last two days had been westerly. I had no time to lose. The ship was not in a condition for battle, even with an enemy of equal force, and their force was overwhelming. I therefore determined, with the concurrence of the First and Flag-lieutenants, to save the crew for future service by landing them at Craney Island, the only road for retreat open to us, and to destroy the ship to prevent her falling into the hands of the enemy. I may add that, although not formally consulted, the course was approved by every commissioned officer in the ship.

“There is no dissenting opinion. The ship was accordingly put on shore as near the main land in the vicinity of Craney Island as possible, and the crew landed. She was then fired, and after burning fiercely fore and aft for upwards of an hour, blew up a little before five on the morning of the 11th.

“We marched for Suffolk, twenty-two miles, and reached it in the evening, and from thence came by railroad to this city.

“It will be asked what motives the pilots could have had to deceive me. The only imaginable one is, that they wished to avoid going into battle.

“Had the ship not been *lifted*, so as to render her unfit for action, a desperate contest must have ensued with a force against us too great to justify much hope of success;

and, as battle is not their occupation, they adopted this deceitful course to avoid it. I cannot imagine another motive, for I had seen no reason to distrust their good faith to the Confederacy.

“My acknowledgments are due to the First Lieutenant, Ap Catesby Jones, for his untiring exertions and for the aid he rendered me in all things. The details for firing the ship and landing the crew were left to him, and everything was conducted with the most perfect order.

“To the other officers of the ship, generally, I am also thankful for the great zeal they displayed throughout.

“The *Virginia* no longer exists, but three hundred brave and skillful officers and seamen are saved to the Confederacy.

“I presume that a Court of Inquiry will be ordered to examine into all the circumstances I have mentioned, and I earnestly solicit it. Public opinion will never be put right without it.

“I am, sir, with great respect,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Flag-officer Commanding.”

“Honorable S. R. Mallory,

“Secretary of the Navy.”

## CHAPTER FIFTEENTH.

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The destruction of the *Virginia* necessary and proper. Admiral Buchanan's view of the act. Flag-officer Tattnall ordered to return to Savannah and take command of the naval defenses of Georgia. He demands a Court of Inquiry, which convenes and finds adversely to Captain Tattnall. Protest entered, by some of the officers of the *Virginia*, against the official approval of the finding. Published strictures upon the conduct and finding of the court. Flag-officer Tattnall demands a Court Martial. It is ordered. Its composition. Charges, and Specifications of Charges preferred. Tattnall's defense. Finding of the court. General satisfaction at the triumphant vindication of Flag-officer Tattnall. Letter of the Honorable J. L. Petigru.

There can be no question of the fact that upon the evacuation of Norfolk the usefulness of the *Virginia* terminated. The enemy would not meet her in the waters of Hampton Roads. All avenues for supplies,—such as coal, provisions, and water,—and all opportunities for repairs, were cut off. Her draft of water, (twenty-two feet six inches), was too great to allow her to steam up the James river. To have lightened her sufficiently to have permitted her, even under the most favorable circumstances, to have done so, would have destroyed her formidable character as an iron-clad; for her wooden sides would then have been exposed. Commodore Tattnall fully appreciated the situation and promptly assumed the responsibility of destroying her to prevent her falling into the hands of the Federals. His professional talent and good judgment sanctioned the act, and his nerve sustained him in its execution. Although a great hue and cry resounded from many quarters, and much discontent obtained upon the happening of this unexpected and calam-

itous event, the conduct of the Commodore was, by the best informed, entirely justified. Subsequent reflection, and a more intimate acquaintance with the facts of the case have fully confirmed this verdict and the propriety of his course. So soon as the *Virginia* was blown up, her crew and officers were ordered to Drewry's Bluff, and materially contributed to the salvation of Richmond.

Writing in 1871, and alluding to Commodore Tattnall's conduct on this occasion, Admiral Buchanan says: "This bold, fearless act of responsibility is one of the strongest proofs of his unselfishness, and devotion to the cause, he could have given. He might have remained in command of the *Virginia* until ordered by the Secretary of the Navy to destroy her. Fight he could not, for the enemy would not give him the opportunity. He would then have avoided the responsibility which caused such illiberal, unjust comments on his act by the Court of Inquiry which was ordered to inquire into the *cause* of the destruction of the *Virginia*. Had Commodore Tattnall not possessed the boldness and forethought he did, and had he delayed the destruction of that steamer, Richmond would have been shelled by the iron-clads of the enemy, which soon made their appearance at Drewry's Bluff, where the officers and men of the *Virginia* had arrived in time to mount a few guns in addition to those already in position, and man and fight them. The enemy was driven off after sustaining much injury. The officers and men behaved very gallantly, and for a few days the navy was highly complimented for saving Richmond. But its services there were soon forgotten."

The vessels composing the Confederate naval force in the waters of Virginia having been either destroyed, or sunk as obstructions in James river, Flag-officer Tattnall was,



on the 19th of May, 1862, ordered to proceed to Savannah and resume the command of the naval defenses at that point.

The following is a copy of the order referred to :

“CONFEDERATE STATES OF AMERICA,  
“NAVY DEPARTMENT,  
“RICHMOND, May 19th 1862.

“Flag-officer JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Commanding Naval Defenses of Virginia, Etc.,

“Richmond, Va. :

“SIR: You are hereby detached from the command of the naval defenses of the waters of Virginia, and will proceed to Savannah, Ga., and resume command of the naval defenses of the State of Georgia.

“Your former command has been divided, Captain Ingraham having been assigned to the command of the waters of South Carolina.

“I am, respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“S. R. MALLORY,

“Secretary of the Navy.”

The wild clamor raised over the destruction of the *Virginia*, and manifestations of public dissatisfaction with the act, caused Commodore Tattnall to insist upon a Court of Inquiry to investigate the facts connected with the loss of that vessel. The court was detailed; and, strange to say, the three officers constituting it were disappointed applicants for the command of the *Virginia*. Before them Tattnall had, without solicitation, been preferred by the Department. The members of this court were Flag-officer Forrest, Flag-officer Ingraham, and Captain Lynch. All of

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them were aspirants for promotion under the bill creating Admirals. To Forrest, Tattnall was junior in rank, but senior to the other two. This Court of Inquiry, convoked by order of the Navy Department on the 20th of May, 1862, assembled two days afterwards in the city of Richmond. The special business before it was "to investigate and inquire into the destruction of the steamer *Virginia*, express an opinion as to the necessity of destroying her, and state particularly whether any and what disposition could have been made of that vessel."

Having taken testimony, and heard the statement submitted by Flag-officer Tattnall, the court was cleared for deliberation. After consideration, the following report was adopted :

"The court, after a full and careful examination and investigation of the evidence connected with the destruction by fire of the Confederate States steamer *Virginia*, on the morning of May 11th, 1862, near Craney Island, respectfully report that it was effected by the order and under the supervision of Flag-officer Tattnall after her draft had been reduced to twenty feet six inches, and on the representations of the pilots that in consequence of recent prevalent westerly winds she could not be taken with a draft of eighteen feet as high as Westover, near Harrison's bar in James river (whither he designed to take her) which they previously stated they could do.

"I. The destruction of the *Virginia* was, in the opinion of the court, unnecessary at the time and place it was effected.

"II. It being clearly in evidence that Norfolk being evacuated and Flag-officer Tattnall having been instructed to prevent the enemy from ascending James river, the *Virginia*,

with very little more, if any lessening of draft, after lightening her to twenty feet six inches aft, with her iron sheathing still extending three feet under water, could have been taken up to Hog Island in James river (where the channel is narrow) and could then have prevented the larger vessels and transports of the enemy from ascending; the court is of opinion that such disposition ought to have been made of her, and if it should be ascertained that her provisions could have been replenished, when those on board were exhausted, then the proper time would have arrived to take into consideration the expediency or practicability of striking a last blow at the enemy or destroying her.

“In conclusion, the court is of opinion that the evacuation of Norfolk, the destruction of the Navy Yard and other public property, added to the hasty retreat of the military under General Huger, leaving the batteries unmanned and unprotected, no doubt conspired to produce in the minds of the officers of the *Virginia* the necessity of her destruction at the time, as, in their opinion, the only means left of preventing her from falling into the hands of the enemy; and seems to have precluded the consideration of the possibility of getting her up James river to the point or points indicated.”

The finding of the Court of Inquiry,—so condemnatory of Flag-officer Tattnall and his officers,—appeared so utterly uncalled for, and at variance with the legitimate effect of the evidence submitted, that it excited marked astonishment in the minds of right thinking men all over the land,—whether in the naval and military service, or civilians. So unjust did they regard it, that some of the officers of the *Virginia* entered in the Navy Department a protest against its approval. After alluding to the helpless condition in

which the *Virginia* would have been placed had she been lightened sufficiently to have enabled her to ascend James river, the protestants say: "Thus situated, the *Virginia* was comparatively helpless against iron-clad vessels, and would have fallen an easy prey to the enemy. But it may be unnecessary that we should discuss this question, for we are not responsible for the destruction of the vessel. *That responsibility devolves upon one under whom we were proud to serve. The life of Flag-officer Tattnall, now well-nigh spent in the service of his country, more than contradicts any imputation upon his name for chivalrous bravery. The country knows that he is not the man to become panic-stricken.*"

The following strictures upon the finding of the court, penned by an officer of the *Virginia* who testified frankly and boldly for the public benefit, will be reread with interest:

"JUNE 23, 1862.

"TO THE EDITORS OF THE ENQUIRER :

"GENTLEMEN: Much has been said and written about the destruction of the *Virginia*, and the late Court of Inquiry has expressed the opinion 'that it was unnecessary at the time and place it occurred,' that the vessel might have been 'taken to Hog Island in James river, and there prevented the passage of the enemy's gun-boats and transports up the river.' In all that I have seen, and heard against the matter, there has not occurred one idea worthy the consideration of an intelligent naval officer; and although the times are troubled with weighty matters, requiring the public to look to the future and not to the past, I propose to investigate the subject before us *now*, that it may not fester in the minds of those ignorant of naval matters, and become an incurable national sore. There are but three conceiva-

ble things that could apparently have been done with the *Virginia*, viz: to take her a certain distance up James river, to remain in Hampton Roads, or to pass Old Point. Before discussing them, let me say that the *Virginia* drew twenty-two feet six inches water, was three hundred and twelve feet long, her sides, inclined at a horizontal angle of about thirty-five degrees, extended *below the surface of the water*, and her gun-deck ports only five feet above it. First, in order to have taken the vessel to Hog Island, she had to be lightened to twenty feet. This draft would have brought her inclined armor above the water, and left about two-fifths of her perpendicular sides aft covered only by one inch of iron for two feet in depth, exposing her magazine to every well depressed shot at close quarters, and her after 'stern post,' which if broken would have destroyed her propeller and rudder.

"The best position of Hog Island, which the *Virginia* could have taken, is thirty-five miles above Newport News, and the shoalest water occurs about four miles above Newport News, where the river is nearly six miles wide. Had the vessel got aground here, which is highly probable, as her helm had no command of her when her keel was near the bottom, she would, at low tide, have been an easy prey to any of the enemy's vessels. Being very sharp under water, with a deep keel, she would have keeled over, exposing her naked sides, and rendering her battery useless. But suppose she got to Hog Island safely, where the narrowest part of the river is about two miles wide. The *Galena*, (iron-clad), the *Aroostook*, and *Port Royal*, all armed with heavy eleven-inch guns, had gone up the river two days before the evacuation of Norfolk. The *Monitor* and *Nanquah* (iron clad) could have passed a half mile from

the *Virginia* in perfect safety ; and these vessels are exactly those, and no others, that made the attack at Drewry's Bluff. They could have remained in the river, received their ammunition and provisions from General McClellan, and their water anywhere. What 'gun-boats,' then, would the *Virginia* have 'prevented from going up James river?'

"General McClellan has been supplied by way of the York river. There was no reason why any transports should go up James river, and to this day, six weeks having elapsed, we have no reliable information that one of the enemy's transports has come up the river! Then what 'transports' would the *Virginia* have 'prevented from going up James river?' If she could not have done either of these things, as, in the opinion of the Court of Inquiry she should have done, what use was she at Hog Island? It must be seen that a vessel of the importance of the *Virginia* would have been surrounded by the enemy's pickets, night and day; therefore she could never have obtained water or supplies of any kind. To have attempted her destruction at Hog Island would have been, as at any other place but the one where she was destroyed, to give her to the enemy, because she had about three hundred and forty souls on board, and but two small boats, each capable of holding about twenty people; and is it to be supposed that the enemy were so foolish as to permit more than one landing to be made without exacting a pledge that the vessel should not be destroyed? Oh, no! The *Virginia* had no means of making rafts while she could fight her guns. Hence the Court of Inquiry expected three hundred men to stand on her decks, see the match touched to the magazine, and be blown into eternity, or jump overboard and be washed into it, as only one out of about forty could swim, the crew

having been transferred from the army with very few seamen among them.

“Secondly. To remain in Hampton Roads would have been to do nothing, but finally surrender the vessel to the enemy. She could have inconvenienced them by stopping their water communication with Norfolk, but Suffolk and ‘Ocean view’ beach would have been sufficient landings for them. There was nothing in the Roads to fight, unless they played Don Quixote and charged Old Point with about as much effect as he did the wind mills, occasionally feeling a slight reaction from the Lincoln gun 480-lb. shot. Now, if she could not blockade James river at Hog Island, she could not do it at the mouth, where it is five miles wide. But we have seen that the *Virginia* had inclined sides, with her gun deck ports only five feet above the water, hence, whenever the wind blew fresh it raised a sea that washed into the ship and would soon have sunk her; for a vessel of that build, with her greatest bearings below the surface of the water, will go down very rapidly. Now this might have occurred any night when too dark to see where to go. On one occasion the ship had to return to Norfolk when off Craney Island because there was too much sea in the Roads.

“Thirdly. The *Virginia* could only have passed Old Point and gone to York river, or any of the Chesapeake’s tributaries, in the smoothest weather. If she got to York river she could have done nothing still; for many hours before her arrival there, the enemy’s vessels would have known it from Old Point, and gone into the numerous bends and creeks where the *Virginia* could never have reached them. She could not have laid in the narrow channel between Gloucester Point and Yorktown and blockaded the river, for if not sunk by the sea in a few days, she would

have been by the enemy's heavy, long, big rifle bolts from the heights above, without being able to elevate her guns and return the fire. As to going up Chesapeake Bay, or following the enemy's vessels, that would have been madness. The ship was not sea worthy. What vessel would have stopped and fought her under favorable circumstances? Will the Court of Inquiry tell us where that 'final blow' could have been 'struck at the enemy'?

"Now, Messrs. Editors, the *Examiner* of this morning, speaking of the opinion of the Court of Inquiry, gives vent to some very unkind remarks regarding the officers of the *Virginia*. It should have recollected that the opinion of a Court of Inquiry is not a final decision; but that when the exigencies of the service will permit it, a Court Martial has to take up the case.

"The latter court may be composed of thirteen members, the former of three, and until the 'finding' of the Court Martial is promulgated, would it not be proper for those interested to take an intelligent view of the facts in the matter, and not be blindly pricked into a position from which they will be ashamed, perhaps, to recede?

"There was no panic, precipitation, or even haste in the destruction of the *Virginia*; no step was ever taken with more deliberation and coolness. How nonsensical to suppose that the officers, who had served their country a life time, and the brave crew who had stood by the old ship from her first conception through all the fatiguing delays to her completion when many doubted her success, and who fought the battle of Newport News, and thrice since had seen the enemy's vessels fly before them, should have been panic-stricken by hearing that the enemy had surrounded them *on shore*? What harm could have been done



the ship from *the shore*? None, except to prevent landing. No, it is hardly sensible to suppose that the officers were afraid of *the enemy*, but they were afraid of his getting the ship, or the certainty of having to destroy their own lives to prevent it, which the country hardly expected of them under the circumstances.

“I think it is clearly shown by the foregoing facts, that had any other disposal been made of the ship, she would finally have fallen into the enemy’s hands without having done our cause any service beforehand. Her great draught of water, extreme length, unwieldiness, and unseaworthiness, rendered her the most difficult of vessels to manage. She was of no service but in *deep smooth water*. Deep water is constantly rough; if not, it must be too narrow for the *Virginia* to have worked in. She was intended only for the defense of Norfolk harbor; but, after fighting the battle of Newport News, the public mind magnified her to a power which it was supposed could lay the Northern ports under contribution. The officers were not called upon to disabuse them of this highly flattering idea, until now, in their own defense. But because they have to do it as a defense, an intelligent reader will not believe that they were fairly arraigned for trial. I have been writing this article under the supposition that the officers were responsible for the destruction of the vessel, because the Court of Inquiry has committed an act of supererogation in thus charging them. But the *Virginia* had a Flag-officer in command, and a braver, truer man never trod under his country’s flag. His feeble health has not in the slightest degree impaired his judgment, and every step he took in command of that ship proved the fact. He it was whom the Court of Inquiry had to deal with. They had only to state whether the act was

necessary or not, and the facts leading to it, and the commander was responsible. Who ever thinks of investigating a defeat or a retreat, and charging the officers with their opinions or advice asked by the General commanding? A man in any responsible position is expected to inform himself before taking any step, but no one asks or cares where he got his information. He is put there to judge. You might as well hold the lawyers responsible for the 'decision of a jury,' a court, or judges. They deliver the verdict, and it is executed. The Captain gives the order, and the ship is destroyed.

"Now, I deny that there is one single word in all the evidence before the Court of Inquiry to show that the officers were panic-stricken, or that they were actuated by any other sense than a clear, deliberate understanding of the awful necessity of the occasion. They were perfectly aware how high the ship was held in the public estimation, and of the outburst of indignation that would meet her unexpected destruction, because the public may be very good judges of military matters, but it requires a lifetime to become a seaman and a judge of nautical affairs. Never was a commander forced by his own country into a more painful position; but, with a high moral courage worthy of the man, he coolly and calmly gave the order to destroy his ship. It took nearly four hours to accomplish it, proving there was no panic or precipitancy. The small arms and sufficient ammunition were all saved; the men were formed in military order and marched to Suffolk, twenty-two miles, after ten hours of the most arduous labor, and made a narrow escape from capture by the enemy, who, it was expected, would cut them off as they passed near Portsmouth.

"For myself, I am not only satisfied that the destruction

of the *Virginia* was necessary, 'at the time and place it occurred,' but I assert that her destruction at the time saved the city of Richmond. Moral effect is a much more active agent in our affairs than the people are yet accustomed to recognize, and it is now generally conceded that the victory of Manassas has done us more harm than good. The Southern people are high spirited and determined, when aroused, but they are fond of ease and pleasure, and will seek them whenever to be found. Hence, after victory come demoralization and a 'laying back' upon our laurels, whilst the wary foe, nerved to madness, prepares for revenge. The people had trusted that the existence of the *Virginia* insured our blockade of James river; and although the gallant and energetic officers of the *Patrick Henry* and *Jamestown* were working hard at Drewry's Bluff, yet the means at their command were insufficient to render the position impassable by the time the enemy's gun-boats could have come up. Suddenly it bursts upon the public ear, the *Virginia* is destroyed! Then came 'hot haste,' and munitions of war and things that could assist the barricade were hurried night and day to the Bluff. The officers and crew of the *Virginia* having pushed through to Richmond, traveling unceasingly, worn out, and broken down, were sent immediately down; and ankle deep in mud, exposed to unceasing rain for three days, without provisions or a change of clothing, they assisted, day and night, in mounting heavy guns and placing obstructions to the enemy's passage of the river. The last gun was not quite ready for action when the burst of the enemy's shell over their heads told that the strife was at hand. It did come, and how gallantly the little navy maintained its reputation on that day, the good citizens of Richmond may be willing

to acknowledge; and perhaps they may sometimes think that some of these men were not 'panic-stricken' when they destroyed the *Virginia*.

"In conclusion, Messrs. Editors, I say that the destruction of the *Virginia* required the exercise of a moral courage which will outlive the late Court of Inquiry and the inconsiderate editorials of the press. I am proud to have been one of her crew from beginning to end, but the proudest moments, in connection with her, were those in which I saw the flames burst from her hatches, and felt that the enemy's tread would never pollute her decks.

"RAY."

Indignant at the injustice done to himself and officers of the *Virginia* by the finding of the Court of Inquiry, Commodore Tattnall insisted upon a Court Martial.

Accordingly, a General Court Martial was ordered to convene at the city of Richmond, Virginia, on the fifth day of July, 1862, or as soon thereafter as practicable, for the trial of Flag-officer Josiah Tattnall.

The following officers were detailed as members of the court:

Captains Lawrence Rousseau, Franklin Buchanan, and Sidney S. Lee.

Commanders Robert J. Robb, Murray Mason, Eben Farrant, A. B. Fairfax, M. F. Maury, and George Minor.

Lieutenants W. L. Maury and Robt. B. Pegram.

To this detail Captain George N. Hollins was subsequently added.

Robert Ould was appointed Judge Advocate. The court convened on the 5th of July, 1862, and, having been fully organized on the 7th, proceeded to business.

The following charges, and specifications of charges, were read by the Judge Advocate :

“CHARGE FIRST.

“Culpable destruction of an armed steamer of the Confederate States Navy.

“*Specification 1st.*—In this, that the said Captain Josiah Tattnell, on the eleventh day of May, eighteen hundred and sixty-two, culpably and without sufficient reason for so doing, did destroy by fire the Confederate steamer *Virginia*, in Hampton Roads, near Norfolk, Virginia.

“*Specification 2d.*—In this, that the said Captain Josiah Tattnell, on the 11th day of May, 1862, at Hampton Roads, near Norfolk, Virginia, did culpably destroy the said steamer *Virginia*, when, with the draft to which she had been then and there, or might have been reduced, she could have been carried up James river to a place of usefulness, free from immediate danger.

“CHARGE SECOND—NEGLIGENCE.

“*Specification 1st.*—In this, that the said Captain Josiah Tattnell, on the said 11th day of May, 1862, at said Hampton Roads, did proceed to lighten the said steamer *Virginia* for the purpose of taking her up James river, retaining, however, her armament, ordnance stores, necessary coal, water, and provisions, without first having ascertained from sources of information within his reach, to what extent the draft of the said steamer would be reduced by such lightening.

“*Specification 2d.*—In this, that the said Captain Josiah Tattnell, after having lightened the said steamer *Virginia* to a certain draft, on the said 11th day of May, 1862, at said Hampton Roads, then and there, and before said time,

neglected and failed to ascertain from sources of information within his reach the fact that the said steamer, at said draft, could have been carried about forty miles above the mouth of James river to Hog Island.

“CHARGE THIRD—IMPROVIDENT CONDUCT.

“*Specification.*—In this, that the said Captain Josiah Tattnall, on or about the 11th day of May, 1862, when off Sewell’s Point, in Hampton Roads, intending to take said steamer *Virginia* up James river, did then and there proceed to lighten said steamer, instead of taking her up James river and there lightening her, when the necessity for so doing arose, and to the extent of that necessity.

“S. R. MALLORY,

“Secretary of the Navy.”

To the above the accused, Captain Josiah Tattnall, pleaded “Not Guilty.”

Until the 17th of July the Court was continuously engaged in hearing testimony.

On the 19th the accused read and submitted the following defense :

“MR. PRESIDENT AND GENTLEMEN :

“After serving fifty years with unblemished reputation, you may well imagine the concern I feel at being arraigned before you on charges affecting my judgment and conduct in the face of the enemy.

“It is known to the court that this trial grew out of the finding of a Court of Inquiry convened to inquire into the facts attending the destruction of the steamer *Virginia* whilst under my command in Hampton Roads ‘on the 11th of May last,’ with instructions to report their opinion as to the necessity of destroying her, and particularly ‘whether

any and what other disposition could have been made of the vessel;' and that the Court of Inquiry, upon the evidence of much the same witnesses that you have heard, reported that she ought not to have been destroyed at the time and place she was. That I, having been instructed (Norfolk being evacuated) to prevent the enemy from ascending James river, the ship, with very little more, if any lightening of draft, with her iron sheathing still extending three feet under water, could have been taken up to Hog Island, in James river (where the channel is narrow); could there have prevented the larger transports and vessels of the enemy from ascending; and that such disposition should have been made of her; and if it should be ascertained that her provisions could not be replenished when those on board were exhausted, then the proper time would have arrived to take into consideration the expediency or practicability of striking a last blow at the enemy, or destroying her.

"The substance of the finding of the Court of Inquiry, so far, may probably be embraced in the first charge and specification of 'culpably' destroying the ship in Hampton Roads, 'when, with the draft to which she had been, or might have been reduced, she could have been carried up James river to a place of usefulness, free from immediate danger.'

"But there is a further part of the finding of the Court of Inquiry (and the most injurious of all to myself), which is not, as it seems, clearly, although such is avowed by the Judge Advocate to have been his intentions, embraced in the charge before the court. I have applied to the Secretary of the Navy to have it made the subject of specific charge, but was informed by that officer that he had referred

the matter to the Judge Advocate, who expresses the opinion that it is substantially so embraced. In that point of view I may refer to it. It is as follows: 'In conclusion, the court are of opinion that the evacuation of Norfolk, the destruction of the Navy Yard and other public property, added to the hasty retreat of the military under General Huger, leaving the batteries unmanned and unprotected, no doubt conspired to produce in the minds of the officers of the *Virginia* the necessity of her destruction at the time, as, in their opinion, the only means left of preventing her from falling into the hands of the enemy; and seems to have precluded the consideration of the possibility of getting her up *James river to the point or points indicated.*' The innuendo here is not to be misunderstood. It implied that the destruction of the ship was the effect of panic on the part of those engaged in it.

"Nothing could be more blighting to the honor and reputation of an officer, than this imputation, if sustained; and in this connection I desire to remind the court of the healing scope and efficacy of the judgment they have the power to pronounce, if the proof in the case shall appear to entitle me to it. The court may not only pronounce a dry verdict of acquittal, it may do more. 'Trial before Courts Martial,' (says Dehart, p. 180), 'must often involve the investigation of divers particulars, under various and distinct charges. Circumstances which are embodied in the charges, and upon which constructive guilt is charged, are necessarily dependent upon *motive*, by which the degree of criminality is determined.

"It consequently rests with the court to ascertain this particular degree, and declare it by their finding, and the verdict may be *special*, as it is not necessary that it be *gen-*



eral, as to the guilt or innocence of the prisoner.' And again, (p. 182), 'Court Martials have at times stated the motives of acquittal, and given an opinion of the conduct of the accused at length.'

"Now I respectfully and confidently invoke, nay, claim of this enlightened body of military men, the fullest inquiry into and report of my motives and conduct in regard to the destruction of the *Virginia*; and am fully prepared to stand or fall by its award.

"It will be perceived that the first charge of 'culpable' destruction of the *Virginia* is by no means narrowed by the first specification of culpably, and without sufficient reason for so doing, destroying, by fire, the steamer *Virginia*.

"It is as broad and undefined as the charge itself, involving all the circumstances in which I was placed, as respects every possible use to which the ship could have been devoted at any time previous to her destruction. This would seem to invite an allusion to the events which preceded the contemplated evacuation of Norfolk, after which it will be seen I was left no alternative but to attempt to defend James river.

"When, on the 25th of March last, I was ordered to the defense of the waters of Virginia, and to hoist my flag on the steamer *Virginia*, I could scarcely be supposed insensible to the peril of reputation to which I became exposed, from the extraordinary and extravagant expectations in the public mind, founded on ignorance of the character of the ship, and the recent brilliant success of Commodore Buchanan under circumstances which could not again be looked for. The frigates of the enemy were incautiously at anchor in Hampton Roads, and the opportunity was seized by that gallant officer with a judgment and prompt-

ness which ensured the glorious result, which, while it could not exalt him too highly in public estimation, unfortunately produced a false estimate of the ship, dangerous to the reputation of his successor. From the day of his success to the evacuation of Norfolk, I do not think that a single vessel of the enemy has anchored in Hampton Roads, excepting a few gun-boats and small transports lying either under the guns of the forts, or on flats unapproachable by the *Virginia*.

“Yet, for the very brief space of time when the ship was out of dock, or not in the hands of the yard, but under my command (thirteen days out of forty-five) the court will, I may be permitted to say, perceive in the evidence no signs of indisposition on my part to make her as annoying and destructive as possible to the enemy.

“Aware that Hampton Roads furnished me no field for important operations, I early turned my thoughts to passing the forts and striking unexpectedly at some distant point, say New York, or Port Royal and Savannah, and in a letter of the 10th of April, to the Secretary, I conveyed my views as follows :

“‘I have been aware from the first that my command is dangerous to my reputation, from the expectation of the public, founded on the success of Commodore Buchanan, and I have looked to a different field from his to satisfy them.

“‘I shall never find in Hampton Roads the opportunity my gallant friend found.

“‘There is no chance for me but to pass the forts and strike elsewhere, and I shall be gratified by your authority to do so as soon as the ship shall be in a suitable condition ~~to do so.~~’

“It will be perceived that this letter was written under the influence of expectations of improvement in the condition of the ship, created by the letters received by me from the Secretary of the Navy, informing me of her weak points, and the changes in her armor which were then in progress. How much these expectations were disappointed is made manifest from the evidence. Even the designed improvements were not fully effected, and at no time did the *Virginia* attain the power and capacity of a sea-going vessel, or exceed the measure of usefulness originally designed for her—that of harbor defense.

“When, in compliance with the Secretary’s order, I consulted Commodore Buchanan on the character and power of the ship, he expressed the distinct opinion then, as he has testified here, that she was unseaworthy, and he informed me then that she was not sufficiently buoyant, and that in a common sea she would founder.

“Her construction was such that the moment the sea struck her, the water would rush into her ports.

“Mr. Porter, the naval constructor of the ship, has testified that he informed me he had reported to the Secretary of the Navy that the ship could not go to sea with safety. And such were the radical defects of her engines, as greatly to retard and interfere with her operations even in the smooth waters of Elizabeth City and Hampton Roads.

“The official report of acting Chief Engineer Ramsay, of the 5th of May (made part of your record), is in this point so important as to challenge special attention.

“Moreover, it is in evidence that on five trips made from Norfolk to Hampton, a distance of but ten miles, the engines failed twice, obliging me, on one occasion, to return to Norfolk to repair them; and on another, making it neces-

sary to work one of her engines at high pressure, 'just managing' (to use the words of the Chief Engineer in his report of the 5th of May, to Lieutenant Catesby Jones), 'to reach her anchorage at Norfolk.' Under these untoward circumstances, I was mortified beyond measure by frequent suggestions, not only from unofficial, but high official sources, of important services to be performed by the *Virginia*, founded on the most exaggerated ideas of her qualities, among them the feasibility of passing the forts and going into York river to assist the military operations at the Peninsula.

"It was while these conceptions formed the subject of anxious reflections with me that the Chief Engineer volunteered his report to me of the 5th of May, in which he enters particularly and at length into the subject of the ship's capacity. He says, as to her engines, 'that from present and past experience he is of opinion that they cannot be relied on; that in the two years' cruise of the *Merrimac* they were continually breaking down when least expected, and the ship had to be sailed under canvas the greater part of the cruise; that the engines gave out the day before, as he had already reported, after running only a few hours, and as he could not ensure their working any length of time, he deemed it his duty to report, etc.; that at the time he was ordered to the vessel, *he was informed that it was not the intention to take the ship where a delay, occasioned by a derangement in the machinery, would endanger her safety, and that she would always be accessible to the Navy Yard for repairs*, which was the reason why he had deferred this report,' etc. He adds: 'Each time that we have gone down, I have had to make repairs, which could not have been done aboard ship very well, or, if done at all, would have required a great deal of time.'

“The pilots, too, my only source of information as to the feasibility of carrying the ship past the forts into York river, report in writing substantially (their report is of record) that they could not, with any probability of success, take the ship there by night, and that it would require a clear day, that they must see the land, and that if it should come on to blow, or the weather be thick, there was no harbor in which they could place her. They say, ‘If the lights, light-boats, and buoys, which were found necessary for the navigation of the channel, still existed, there would be no trouble in reaching York river, except so far as the enemy may have obstructed the way, for there is plenty of water. If the weather were smooth and clear, and the lead and compass could be relied on, we could still take the *Virginia* to Yorktown. But the lights, light-boats, and buoys having been removed, the compasses of the ship being almost useless from local attraction, and the lead equally so by the fire of the enemy, we have serious doubts as to our ability to carry the draft of twenty-three feet with any reasonable prospect of success.’

“And the ‘extensive flats,’ say they, ‘inside of York river, on both sides, offer a safe retreat to a large fleet from the fire of a vessel of this draft; and all vessels in Poquosin river, or at anchor off Shipping Point, are not to be approached by the *Virginia* nearer than four miles.’

“That the enemy had obstructed the way was plain to view, from the unusual manner in which they used the channel between the forts; that they had done so most effectually, may be safely inferred from the resources of material and skill at their command, and their known industry in their use. To have attempted to pass this obstructed channel in open day, in full view of both forts and

all their men-of-war, some twenty in number, including the Monitor and other iron vessels and steamers fitted for the express purpose of running her down (see the testimony of Lieutenant Catesby Jones), would indeed have merited the epithet of folly, which, in the opinion of that gallant officer, the effort would have deserved.

“Thus it will be seen that I was in command of a ship that could not go to sea, nor even into Chesapeake Bay, without great hazard (and that without reference to the enemy), and that with a great draft of water, in narrow channels, she was in a great degree trammelled by pilots not reliable, as is clearly shown by the record and the Secretary’s letters to me, of the 1st and 8th of April, on file, thus depriving me of the privilege of manœuvring her freely, and by my own judgment.

“I had nothing left me but to be patient, to attempt what I thought was in the compass of the ship’s power, and to carry out the orders of the Secretary of the Navy.

“During the short time she was not in dock, or in the hands of the Navy Yard (some thirteen days), it is proved that she went down to the Roads and offered fight to the Monitor.

“She covered the gun-boats at that time while they made prizes. She showed herself several times at Sewell’s Point, giving the enemy the impression she was ready for any service. On one occasion she drove the enemy off from bombarding Sewell’s Point. She also kept the Roads clear of the enemy’s men-of-war.

“From a letter from the Secretary of the Navy, of the 9th of April, enclosing one from General Lee, of the same date, suggesting operations in the direction of Yorktown, I extract the following paragraph :

“I regard the *Virginia* as of the first importance to the safety of Norfolk, and hence, though the suggestion of General Lee of a dash at the enemy on York river holds out temptation to go at him at once, it should not be made if Norfolk is to be thereby exposed to capture.’

“From another letter from the Secretary, of the 12th of April, the following is also extracted :

“No immediate necessity for your leaving the Roads exists, and concurring with you in the opinion you express, that were the *Virginia* to pass the forts Norfolk would be in danger of immediate capture, you will not subject it to this hazard without the sanction of this Department.’

“This sanction was never given. I will only add, in this connection, as evidence of my willingness to undertake, under these adverse circumstances and embarrassments, any hazardous enterprise which the Government might deem of public service, an extract from my reply to the Secretary’s letter of the 8th of April :

“If the presence of the *Virginia* at Yorktown be deemed at Richmond of such paramount importance as to call for the passage of the forts at all hazards, I shall, on hearing from you by telegraph to that effect, attempt it at all hazards.’

“And again, in a letter of the 30th of April, I wrote :

“I am prepared to run any hazard with her (the ship), under the advice and direction of the department, but in view of your instructions to me, am not prepared to abandon Norfolk and Hampton Roads for a distant field of action, and for an object of very doubtful attainment.’

“The foregoing imperfect recital covers the events of my campaign occurring before the evacuation of Norfolk. I rely on it to vindicate the propriety of my motives and

conduct previous to that event. As the specification that 'the ship,' at the draft to which she was, or might have been reduced, could have been carried up James river to a place of usefulness, free from immediate danger, is designed, as the Judge Advocate avows, to conform with the part of the finding of the Court of Inquiry, already stated, that she should have been carried to Hog Island, in James river, and in her lightened condition employed there as a war vessel, it would seem that a comparison of the prudence and wisdom of that course, with the course actually pursued, will exhaust this part of the subject, and leave the court under no difficulty of decision between the two.

"Now that the *Virginia* could have been fought as a war vessel any where after being lightened to twenty feet six inches, by which her knuckle was exposed, rests upon no opinion, military or unmilitary, that has ever been expressed, except that of the Court of Inquiry. On the contrary, the testimony is unanimous the other way, including that of Mr. Porter, the naval constructor, and that her iron sheathing when so lightened, though it did extend three feet six inches below the water, (it is omitted from the finding that a considerable portion of it was only one inch thick, its original thickness, the additional covering, with two additional inches, not extending the whole way), would not have protected her.

"Then as to the eligibility of Hog Island as a place of retreat, it is unanimously condemned by every military opinion which has been expressed upon it; and it is not a little remarkable that in the proceedings of the Court of Inquiry no military opinion is asked at all on this point.

"It rests on the opinion of pilots Parrish and Wright alone. *They* told the court the ship could have been light-



ened at Hog Island with the same facility as where she was lightened, and that she could have protected the river, because the enemy would have to pass in close reach of her guns; that is, we were bound to lighten her some to get her up to Hog Island.

“She could protect the river as well at Hog Island, as the enemy’s vessels would have to pass her in four hundred yards, within range of her guns, and that was deemed so clearly demonstrative of the superior eligibility of Hog Island, as the place of resort, that the court thinks nothing could have blinded our eyes to it but the evacuation of Norfolk, the destruction of the Navy Yard and other public property, added to the hasty retreat of the military under General Huger, leaving the batteries unmanned and unprotected, no doubt conspiring to produce in the minds of the officers of the *Virginia* the necessity of her destruction at the time, as in their opinion the only means left of preventing her from falling into the hands of the enemy, and seeming to have precluded the consideration of the possibility of getting up James river to the point or points indicated. Comment here is surely unnecessary. Nor can it be necessary to dwell on the alternative presented by the Court of Inquiry, of destroying the ship at Hog Island, or, in her then exposed condition, ‘*making a last dash at the enemy,*’ consisting of twenty sail, including the *Minnesota*, the *Monitor*, and three other iron-clad steamers, the ram *Vanderbilt*, and others; or should we, after passing through them, have gone down to Cape Henry, rounded the Horse Shoe,—the lighter vessels of the enemy, drawing sixteen feet, the while passing the swash channel and reaching Yorktown hours before us,—and come to Yorktown only to find the enemy’s vessels placed in safety above us, and then with

boats lost and provisions consumed, have hoisted a flag of distress, or flag of truce, and surrendered at discretion? A glance at the evidence will show that the idea of carrying the ship to Hog Island, and keeping her there for defense, if ever conceived, could only have been dismissed as vain and futile.

“Lieutenant Catesby Jones says:

“I think it ought not to have been done, because the enemy was in possession of the batteries above Hog Island.

“The *Galena* and other gun-boats were also up the river. There had been batteries of our own opposite Hog Island, which commanded the anchorage which the *Virginia* would have to have taken, and if there were no guns there, the enemy could easily have placed them there.

“The ship, with her inclined armor above the water, which at that place we could have had no means of bringing below the water, was not in a condition to contend against such batteries and the gun-boats.

“She would necessarily have to have been at anchor, and could not change her position.

“We did not have much water on board, and as the water at Hog Island was not fresh, we could not have stayed there long.

“The proper place in James river to which the steamer should be taken up, was a matter of discussion between Commodore Tattnall and myself, and he was of opinion she could be taken up to Westover, which was above the enemy's batteries, in communication with Richmond, and where there was a good position for batteries on shore to assist us in protecting the river.’

“Again he says, speaking of the feasibility of sinking her to her original draft at Hog Island:

“She could not, by any means in our power, have been sunk to her depth of twenty-three feet, and she be preserved as a steamer of war. I think there was water enough to sink her to twenty-three feet at Hog Island, but of this I am not certain. If we had put water in her it would have put out the fires, and drowned the magazine and shell room, and any idea of aid from the shore in sinking her was forbidden, for to say nothing of the hostile occupation of both shores, we had only two small boats to the ship, carrying fifteen men each in smooth water.’ Surely this is sufficient.

“It only remains to consider briefly the course actually adopted; whether it was prudent or culpable, either in its conception or in its attempted execution under the circumstances.

“The plan of taking the ship up to a narrow part of James river and there assuming a defensive point, was by no means a sudden thought with me, dictated by the hasty and unexpectedly early evacuation of Norfolk.

“After the determination to retreat from Yorktown, and as a consequence of that measure to evacuate Norfolk, whereby both banks of the James would necessarily fall into the hands of the enemy, it had occurred to me, as the best means of defending the river to which I had been specially ordered, and had been communicated to the gallant officers near me, who shared my confidence and counsel.

“The attempt was precipitated, it is true, by the unexpected advance of the enemy on Norfolk.

“The last orders I received from the Secretary of the Navy in regard to the *Virginia* were by telegraph on the 5th and 6th of May, four days before the abandonment of Norfolk.

“The effect of both was to direct me to protect Norfolk as well as James river, and if possible to prevent the enemy from ascending it. As to this it may be here remarked, as I had signified to the Secretary my inability, with the five vessels under my command, to prevent this, I wrote him on the 21st of April that his gunboats could go from the forts to Newport News, a distance of six miles, with perfect impunity, and that to prevent misconstruction, I wished it understood that I could not prevent it, or their army from crossing except so far as the force of steamers I had placed in the river could do so.

“On the 9th of May, the day before the evacuation, a conference of officers of the army and navy was held, by suggestion of the Secretary of the Navy (in which Commodore Hollins, a member of the court, participated), in which it was decided that the *Virginia* should remain at Sewell’s Point, to cover Norfolk, until after the evacuation. Commodore Hollins has testified to what occurred in that conference.

“He says that it was expected, in the last resort, the ship would be taken up James river to a point of safety for herself, and to protect Richmond; and when asked where he was to have gone to find such a place, he answered, ‘I do not know anything further than what the pilots said, up to Harrison’s bar;’ and when asked, if I had not been able to take her up there, what disposition I was expected to make of her, he replied, that he did not take that into consideration at the time, as he thought it was a thing which could be done, from what the pilots said; and it is in proof that on the 9th, the day before the unexpected evacuation on the 10th, I consulted with Captain Lee, the Commandant at the Navy Yard, as to the best mode of

taking her up without a loss of ballast, and with a view to having the use of her ballast after we got up.

“We arranged that I would take the two empty water tanks, two large floats, and two launches, and not thinking that the enemy would be in Norfolk the next day, I prepared to return to the Navy Yard for all these things. My plan was to place the ship in a narrow part of the river, in fresh water, above the batteries of the enemy on either shore (both being in their hands), in easy communication with Richmond, whence her supplies might be drawn, and with the shore, where batteries of our own might protect and coöperate with her and material might be obtained to sink her to the required draft, and there to defend the river. What might have been the effect if the plan had succeeded (particularly in the present attitude of the opposing armies), must be left to conjecture; at all events it was the best course that suggested itself, in trying and difficult circumstances, and I have not yet been taught by any criticism that it has encountered that a better could be devised.

“The plan, however, in its execution, necessarily depended on two conditions—the one that the ship could be lightened to eighteen feet draft; the other, that with that draft she could be carried as high up as the plan required.

“It is said the first of these conditions was impossible, and that I did not take the requisite means to inform myself that it was so.

“I have to reply, that the Secretary of the Navy, in his letter of March 25th assigning me to the ship and advising me whom to consult about her, says:

“‘Your Flag-officer, Lieutenant Jones, is said to have fought the ship gallantly, and *he is thoroughly informed about her.*’

“Constructor Porter bears the same testimony to Lieutenant Jones’ thorough information about her, and that officer was not only then of opinion, but swears to his belief now, that she could be lightened to eighteen feet; and this was one main source of information on which I relied.

“To the Constructor,—Mr. Porter,—I applied through Pay-master Semple for information on the subject, who swears positively that he obtained the Constructor’s written report that the ship could be lightened to even seventeen feet, and would have stability to that draft in James river. Now, whether Mr. Semple misunderstood Mr. Porter or not, there can be no doubt of the nature of the reply communicated to me, through a reliable source, upon which, in the nature of things, having no knowledge of my own, I was obliged to rely. Nor will the positive and reliable testimony thus given be much shaken by Mr. Porter’s flip-pant answer to the question why he did not give full information—‘That I never spent a thought on the subject—I was busy—I supposed the officers knew all what they were about, and I gave all the information that was asked of me.’

“It will be recollected he was apprised of the meditated disposition of the ship, and had been asked for written official information on the subject.

“Then could the ship be carried to Harrison’s bar with eighteen feet, and did I resort to the proper source of information on the point whether she could be or not?

“I had been early warned against the pilots, yet with no charts accessible, and none of the officers having any knowledge of the sounding of the river, on what else could I rely?

“As early as the 8th of April the Secretary writes to me:

“You are very much in the hands of your pilots. I am convinced they might have placed the ship nearer to the *Minnesota* in the late engagement than they did, and that they erred from a high sense of their responsibility only.’

“But there is ground for the belief that a much darker stain is attached to their conduct.

“It is significant that the statements of a number of witnesses, embarked in a common business, on an important inquiry should be found altogether so wholly destitute of the traces of sincerity and truth; and when it appears that an object was to be attained by such means, it is hard to resist the conclusion of complicity and combination to attain it. That object would seem to have been the destruction of the ship, rather than to go with her beyond the forts or up James river, in the presence of the enemy’s fleet.

“For without proceeding with the dissection of so much tergiversation and falsehood, ‘*experimentum in corpore vile*,’ it is proved as irrefragably as anything can be established by human testimony, that when the destination of the ship seemed to be past the forts and up York river, they were pressing in their representations to all the officers who have testified, that they could carry the ship up to Harrison’s bar with eighteen feet water; and when that project seemed to be abandoned, and the prospect was that the ship, when lightened to that draft, would be carried up James river, perhaps into the presence of the enemy, they permitted, nay, encouraged the lightening to proceed in their presence, until she became helpless, and then surprised her officers with the declaration that they were unable to carry her up at the draft of eighteen feet, to which it was proposed to reduce her, in the then present

state of winds and tides, a qualification which they had never before expressed.

“And they now here falsely declare that by the general understanding of the officers, the ceasing to lighten the ship was owing to the discovery that she could not be reduced to eighteen feet, when it is established beyond doubt or cavil that no such impression prevailed among them, and that it was owing simply and solely to their own sudden and unexpected announcement that she could not ascend the river with that draft.

“They are convicted, too, by several unimpeachable witnesses, of the declaration (in the teeth of their disclaimer here, after it was known that the attempt would be made to ascend the river, the enemy’s fleet having gone up,) that nothing remained to do but to abandon the ship and destroy her; one of them expressing to one witness his opinion of the hardship that they,—the pilots,—with dependent families, should be exposed to the dangers probably to be encountered in the ship.

“He must be a savage judge, indeed, who would visit me with a penalty for the fraudulent impositions practiced on me by these men.

“The attempt to ascend the river (frustrated by the treachery to which I have alluded, and resulting in the ship’s destruction,) was undoubtedly hastened beyond expectation.

“On the 9th it was supposed that the evacuation and removal of the public property would occupy a week or more, during which I was to cover the evacuation, and, so far as might be, prevent the enemy’s ascent.

“On the 10th, information of our design having been traitorously conveyed to the enemy, he was in full march



in force on Norfolk. The City, Navy Yard, and batteries were abandoned, and the naval and military force had retired.

“Nothing remained but still, under increased embarrassments, to prosecute my original design. It was defeated by no fault of mine, but it is shown beyond dispute that from the officers who commanded and superintended the lightening of the ship, to the crew who went to the work with a cheer—in the work itself, in the destruction of the ship, in the landing and retreat of the crew, all was order, deliberation, and energy. And any assumption to the contrary is not only unsupported, but is in the teeth of everything that has been proved in any stage of this cause.

“There is a charge of ‘improvident conduct’ in lightening the steamer at the bight of Craney Island, instead of taking her up James river, and there lightening her when the necessity for doing so arose, and to the extent of that necessity.

“It is easily disposed of. The ascent, to be successful, required that the lightening of the ship should have been done, not in, but out of the presence of the enemy—a result which could more probably be attained by lightening her at once, where she was, instead of being probably compelled in the ascent to carry out the design in his sight. Other reasons might be given, but this seems sufficient.

“Again, some question has been made as to the place where the ship was abandoned and destroyed. The best information I could get recommended that as the easiest place of retreat. It is in proof, by the Secretary of War, that the danger was, when both shores became open to the enemy, that he would pass his forces over to the south side and intercept retreat by the southern bank.

“In that view time was precious,—the landing should be

effected at once. The result was that the retreat of the crew was successful, and in thirty-six hours' time they had reached Drewry's Bluff, ready to coöperate, as they did, in the gallant defense made at that place.

"Thus perished the *Virginia!* and with her many high flown hopes of naval supremacy and success. That denunciation, loud and deep, should follow in the wake of such an event, might be expected from the excited mass who; on occasions of vast public exigency, make their wishes the measure of their expectations, and recognize in public men no criterion of merit but perfect success. But he who worthily aspires to a part in great and serious affairs, must be unawed by the clamor, looking to the right-judging few for present support, and patiently waiting for the calmer time when reflection shall assume a general sway, and by the judgment of all full justice, though tardy, will be done to his character, motives, and conduct.

"Respectfully submitted,

"J. TATTNALL."\*

The testimony of the witnesses and the statements of parties being all before the court; it was cleared for deliberation. After mature consideration the court unanimously found as follows:

"That the first specification of the first charge is not proved.

"That the second specification of the first charge is not proved.

\* Note by Flag-officer Tattnall:

The testimony of two of the Lieutenants of the *Virginia*,—J. T. Wood and Charles King,—was not taken by the Court Martial, owing to their unavoidable absence. They had testified, however, before the Court of Inquiry that they approved of the effort to take the ship up the James river, and that her destruction was the best disposition that could have been made of her.

The testimony and witnesses before the Court Martial and Court of Inquiry were the same, excepting that the Secretary of War and Surgeon Phillips did not testify before the Court of Inquiry.

“And that the accused is not guilty of the first charge.

“That the first specification of the second charge is not proved.

“That the second specification of the second charge is not proved.

“And that the accused is not guilty of the second charge.

“That the specification of the third charge is proved.

“And that the accused is not guilty of the third charge.

“The court do further find that the accused had, while in command of the *Virginia*, and previous to the evacuation of Norfolk, thrown down the gage of battle to the enemy's fleet in Hampton Roads, and that the enemy had declined to take it up; that the day before Norfolk was evacuated, a consultation, at the instance of the Secretary of the Navy, was held by a joint commission of the navy and army officers, as to the best disposition to be made of the ship; that the accused was in favor of passing Fortress Monroe and taking the ship into York river, or of running before Savannah with her; that in this he was overruled by the council, who advised that she should remain on this side of Fortress Monroe for the protection of Norfolk and Richmond; and that in accordance with this advice, she proceeded to regulate her movements; that after the evacuation of Norfolk, Westover, on James river, became the most suitable position for her to occupy; that while in the act of lightening her for the purpose of taking her up to that point, the pilots, for the first time, declared their inability to take her up, even though her draft should be reduced to its minimum of eighteen feet; that by the evacuation of Norfolk and the abandonment of our forts below Westover, both banks of the James river, below that point, were virtually given up to the enemy; that the ship being thus cut off from

Norfolk and Richmond, was deprived of all outward sources of supply, save those of the most precarious and uncertain character; that her store of provisions would not last for more than three weeks; that, when lightened, she was made vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy; and that after having been lightened, there were no available means of bringing her down to her proper draft and fighting trim; and that she had but two small boats, each capable of landing not more than fifteen or eighteen men at a time, even in smooth water.

“Such being the facts and circumstances under the influence of which the *Virginia* found herself after the evacuation of Norfolk, it was, in the opinion of the court, only necessary for the enemy to continue to refuse battle, as he had done since it was first offered by Captain Tattnall early in April, and thence forward to keep a strict watch about the *Virginia*, in order, when her provisions were exhausted, to make her his prize, and her crew his prisoners.

“Being thus situated, the only alternative, in the opinion of the court, was to abandon and burn the ship then and there; which, in the judgment of the court, was deliberately and wisely done by order of the accused.

“Wherefore, the court do award to the said Captain Josiah Tattnall an honorable acquittal.

“L. ROUSSEAU, Capt., FRANKLIN BUCHANAN, Capt.,

“GEO. N. HOLLINS, Capt., ROB'T G. ROBB, Com'der,

“M. MASON, Com'der, EBEN FARRAND, Com'der,

“A. B. FAIRFAX, Com'der, M. F. MAURY, Com'der,

“GEORGE MINOR, Com'der, WM. L. MAURY, Lieut.,

“ROB'T B. PEGRAM, Lieut., ROB'T OULD, Judge Advocate.”

This finding of the court was accepted by the public as a truthful, generous, noble tribute to the courage, enter-

prize, judgment, and professional abilities of Flag-officer Tattnall, and as a just and severe rebuke to the Court of Inquiry. Coming from a detail of officers of such high repute, this vindication was most grateful to the Commodore, who valued his professional reputation far beyond life itself.

As indicating the general satisfaction when the judgment of the court was announced, we clip the following from a leading contemporaneous journal :

“While the friends of our brave old Commodore have never entertained the slightest uneasiness concerning the judgment of the Naval Court Martial, convened at his suggestion, yet the circumstances of his acquittal are such as to occasion a peculiar degree of satisfaction. No honest, well-balanced mind could, under the circumstances, have arrived at any other conclusion ; still officers of the navy, distinguished for their long service, had, from motives of their own, cast a stain upon his well-earned reputation. It was this that caused him to appeal to a still higher tribunal, and demand its judgment. That judgment has been given, and in a manner not only vindictory, but highly complimentary of himself. There can be no appeal from or questioning of the decision of such men as Rousseau, the oldest naval commander in the service ; Buchanan, who commanded the *Virginia* in her great exploits in Hampton Roads and knew well her structure and power ; Pegram, the most gallant seaman of his day, together with Maury, and Mason, and Fairfax, and others.

“We have, from the beginning, regarded this attempt to depreciate the reputation of Commodore Tattnall as the result of ignorance on the part of some, and of jealousy

on the part of others. We, therefore, rejoice that the truth has been vindicated, and his fair fame relieved of every breath of suspicion against it."

Of the fact that true friendship "standeth stiffly in storms" Commodore Tattnall, during this period of trial, had abundant and most pleasing proof. His friend, the Honorable John E. Ward, late Minister to China, who was with him at the affair of the Pei-ho, and on terms of intimacy, repaired to Richmond and by his counsel and legal ability rendered most valuable assistance during the progress of the trial. From men, good and great, came expressions of hope and cordial wishes for the vindication of his fair fame. Among them we select one which will be read with the deepest interest:

"SUMMERVILLE, 7th July, 1862.

"MY DEAR COMMODORE:

"I have often thought it was a cruel necessity that forced a man like you, enjoying a continental reputation, to leave your situation in a great and eminent command for the service of a third or fourth-rate power. You certainly gave a strong proof of that Nostalgia which confers on the spot of one's birth an interest beyond the value of riches, when you threw up one of the proudest situations under the sun to take your part with a people that could offer you nothing better than a cock-boat fleet. Yet the sacrifice was made, and you gave up for a sentiment your rank in the United States Navy; nor can I conceive of a greater instance of self-denial. With such thoughts, judge what my feelings were when I heard that you were reproached by the people for whom you had sacrificed so much, for not fulfilling the expectations of their foolish self-conceit by making one

steamboat, however good, a match for a whole navy. My opinion is worth very little. Age has tamed my voice and arm, and I have lived to bear many things that I would rather never have lived to see; but I cannot refrain from giving vent to my feelings so far as to tell you, my dear Commodore, how deeply I feel the injury done you, and sympathize in your virtuous indignation. I do not allow myself, for a moment, to doubt of your complete justification before the court where you are carried, and before the bar of the public. But the attempt to tarnish your fame by the notoriety of a trial, is an offense hard to atone for. I anticipate a complete triumph for you, but that is but poor satisfaction for the impertinence of a public accusation against a general benefactor.

“Accept, my dear Commodore, the heartfelt sympathy of a friend in that of yours truly,

“J. L. PETIGRU.”

In narrating the story of this trying period in the life of Commodore Tattnall we have carefully refrained from harsh comment. We preferred to present the facts as they existed, and a narrative of the events as they transpired. Grievous were the responsibilities devolved upon those charged with the administration of the departments of the Confederate Government; and, in some instances, the back was unsuited to the burthen. But let that pass. Enough for us to know that this brave Georgian,—the most distinguished that his State ever committed to the winds and waves of old ocean,—a man and an officer of whom any people might justly be proud,—passed through this furnace unscathed, and without the smell of fire upon his professional garments.

## CHAPTER SIXTEENTH.

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Return to Savannah. Changed condition of affairs. Relieved of the command afloat. Official report to Mr. Mallory of naval matters at the Savannah station. The iron-clad *Atlanta*. Commander Page. Lieutenant Webb. History of the *Atlanta*. Her engagement with the *Weehawken* and *Nahant*, and capture by them.

Upon the promulgation of the finding of the Court Martial, Commodore Tattnall returned to Savannah and resumed command of its naval defenses. The entire coast of Georgia was in the possession of the Federals who could enter and depart from its sounds and inlets at pleasure. After the fall of Fort Pulaski the defensive line for the protection of the water approaches to Savannah was materially contracted. There was comparatively little that the navy could accomplish. It lacked both space and opportunity for operations, and was deficient in vessels of war capable of important service. Keenly must the Commodore have felt the change of circumstances, but he had made the sacrifice in the name of his State and no murmur escaped his lips. He had surrendered position, pay, yes, everything that was attractive in the old navy, in response to what he conceived his highest duty, and no one ever heard him utter a word of regret at the step he had taken. He who had been accustomed to commands which an Admiral might envy, who time and again had attracted the gaze of the world by the nobility of his impulses and the valor of his deeds, was now busying himself with what his friend, Mr. Petigru, denominated "nothing better than a cock-boat fleet." Day by day his greatness was expended upon little



things, but he made the most of them and pursued the even tenor of his way with patient endurance. Everywhere, by the officers with whom he associated, by the men whom he commanded, and by the citizens among whom he dwelt, was he regarded with the most profound respect and veneration.

On the 24th of March, 1863, came an order from the Secretary of the Navy relieving him from the command afloat, and limiting him to the shore command at the Savannah station. There was no cause for this; and no explanation for it can be found save that it was on a par with many ungenerous and foolish acts committed by Mr. Mallory, who always craved the execution of wonderful things, expected surprising achievements, and yet possessed not the intellect to suggest or the nerve to order them.

In justice to Commodore Tattnall we here introduce an official communication to which, so far as we can learn, no suitable reply was ever made. The subsequent unfortunate fate of the *Atlanta* sadly demonstrated the wisdom of the views entertained by the Flag-officer:

“CONFEDERATE STATES NAVAL DEPARTMENT,

“SAVANNAH, GA., April 24th, 1863.

“HONORABLE S. R. MALLORY,

“Secretary of the Navy, Richmond, Va. :

“SIR: In obedience to your order of the 24th March, ultimo, to transfer the command afloat on this station to Commander Page, I telegraphed to that officer, then in Charleston on duty, to return to Savannah, and transferred to him verbally, on the 31st of March, and more formally in writing the next morning, the command afloat, with all the vessels, excepting the steamer *Sampson*, retained as a

receiving ship, together with all the officers and men of the station, excepting Assistant Surgeon Sandford, and Lieutenant Morris, in charge of the rendezvous and at present acting as ordnance officer.

“At the time of the transfer all the vessels, the *Georgia* excepted, were lying at Thunderbolt, near the head of Warsaw Sound.

“In view of the *time* and *manner* of my removal from the command afloat, it becomes my duty to review and place on record at the Navy Department the facts which controlled the movements of the *Atlanta* since her transfer to my command.

“On resuming the command of this station, in August last, I found but two armed vessels, the *Savannah*, a small steamer of one gun, with her engines on deck, and the floating battery *Georgia*, of whose inefficiency you were informed. Finding that the obstructions placed in the Savannah river were too distant from the land batteries to be adequately protected by them, I placed the *Georgia* at that point, where she could alone be of service. I took the precaution to write Major-General Penberton, commanding this military department, and Brigadier-General Mercer, commanding the District of Georgia, to accompany and aid me in selecting the position for the *Georgia*, and the one selected had their concurrence. The position was an exposed one, as she could receive no aid from the batteries, and the enemy could approach to within two hundred and fifty yards of her by both the north and south channels; the former having eighteen feet at high water and the latter twelve feet. I informed Lieutenant Commanding J. P. Jones that should his vessel be attacked, I should hoist my flag on board of her and share her fate.

“On resuming the command of the station, I found the steamer *Atlanta* approaching completion. Mr. Tift, who was in charge of her construction, called at my office and showed me his authority from yourself giving him the sole control of her construction, and, in reply to a question, he stated that it was intended that the commandant of the station should have nothing to do with her. I, of course, abstained from interfering in any shape whatever.

“After the transfer of the vessel to me, no time was lost in preparing her for service.

“An unexpected delay was caused, however, by her leaking through her sponsons, and some additional arrangements were found to be essential in the engineer’s department; all of which was reported to you.

“In placing the obstructions in the south channel of the Savannah river the military engineer had informed me that he had so arranged a portion of them that it could be removed in two hours to permit the egress of the *Atlanta*.

“The *Atlanta* being now ready, I determined to attack the enemy’s vessels in Warsaw and Ossabaw sounds on the first high spring tide, that being the only time, owing to her great draft of water, that the ship could get out of the river. I sent Commander McBlair to arrange with the engineer-officer the day and hour for the opening of the passage, and dropped the *Atlanta* down to the obstructions. I was doomed, however, to a bitter disappointment, the arrangements made by the engineer proving a total failure; all of which was circumstantially reported to you in my communication of the 9th February last.

“It took one month before the engineer cleared the passage for me, and I then prepared to use the next spring tide, occurring on the 4th of February last.

“Several days, however, before this high tide, and when the *Atlanta* could not leave the Savannah river, the enemy reinforced his squadron in Ossabaw sound with one of his monitor steamers, and attacked Genesis’ Point Battery. The distance of this point from the *Atlanta’s* anchorage in the Savannah river was, by the route her draft of water would have caused her to take, quite sixty miles, and would, under favorable circumstances, have required ten hours to accomplish.

“The enemy retired from the attack of Genesis’ Point three days before the looked for high tide, and having ascertained that his wooden gun-boats were lying below his iron-clad Monitor, with considerable interval between them, and thinking that the *Atlanta* had speed enough to enable me to avoid an action with the Monitor, and more to silence the clamor of an ignorant and excited public than in the expectation of effecting anything important, I proposed to attack the enemy’s rear.

“I considered the *Atlanta* no match for the monitor class of vessels at close quarters, and in shoal water particularly, as owing to the necessity of keeping her light to enable her to cross the flats and operate in the sounds, at least two feet of her hull below the knuckle were exposed, covered with but two inches of iron.

“With a view to this attack, I endeavored to persuade the pilot to take the *Atlanta* to sea one day before the highest tide, which he positively declined to do, as shown by the annexed copies of his letters,—Nos. 1 and 2,—on the subject. In the meantime, however, the enemy’s squadron in Ossabaw was reinforced and also that in Warsaw by the *Passaic*, monitor, rendering such a movement on my part out of the question. All this was reported to you in my letter of the 9th of February ultimo.

“On the day of this high tide, 4th of February, I left the Savannah river and anchored off the fort at Causton’s Bluff, in Augustine creek, having been requested by General Mercer to cover that point from an attack of the enemy by the south channel of the Savannah, while a change was making in the position of the guns of the fort.

“It was at this point I had the misfortune to lose Commander Wm. WeBlair, between whom and myself there had been the most perfect understanding and unity of views.

“This service at Causton’s Bluff having been performed, I returned with the *Atlanta* to the Savannah river and anchored at the obstructions, with a view to aiding in their defense, and awaiting there the further movements of the enemy. Subsequently the enemy’s iron-clads left the sounds and returned to Port Royal, and judging from this that an attack on Charleston was probable, I took advantage of the first spring tide to drop the *Atlanta* down to Thunderbolt, at the head of Warsaw sound, so as by being rid of the obstructions and flats above that point, I should be enabled more certainly to get to sea when the enemy should have committed himself in an attack on Charleston. In that event, I had two projects in view, either to attack him at Port Royal, should the force left there justify it, or, sweeping the sounds to the south of the Savannah, push on to Key West in the hope of surprising some of the enemy’s vessels in that port. This last would also have enabled me to consume the fortnight, which I must necessarily have passed somewhere outside, until the tides should have allowed a return to the Savannah river.

“While at this anchorage, however, and when the tides were at the lowest, two of the enemy’s iron-clads anchored in the mouth of the Savannah, where none of that class

had ever shown themselves before. They could, in an hour, have attacked the *Georgia* and beyond a doubt destroyed her, for I could not have aided her. Nothing could have prevented this disaster but ignorance of her force and condition.

“I ordered the return of the ship to the Savannah as soon as possible, which could not be, however, sooner than the 3d of April, and four days before that time I transferred the squadron to Commander Page.

“It was my purpose not to have left the Savannah river again until the enemy should have fully committed himself in an attack on Charleston, and then to have gone to sea and executed my plan.

“Having thus detailed my views and action while in command afloat, I have respectfully to ask what supposed defect in my judgment, or error in my conduct, has brought upon me the degradation of a removal from my command when an attack from the enemy was imminent?

“I have also to ask that a Court of Inquiry may be ordered to investigate such conduct on my part as may have been deemed objectionable by you, and that if I have been assailed by persons in this community, as by what I learn is probable, I may be furnished with the names of my assailants that I may unmask their villainy and falsehood.

“I am, sir, very respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Commandant, Savannah.”

Commodore Tattnall very properly refused to be controlled by the opinion of the contractor (who was a landsman charged with converting the *Atlanta* into an iron-clad

vessel of war), in matters requiring nautical skill and experience, and declined to be governed by the suggestions of the Secretary of the Navy as to the management of that vessel, and the time, tide, and circumstances under which she should be fought. Anxious to make her serviceable to the Confederacy, he still exercised his own judgment as to her capabilities and the conditions suited to their exercise. Had specific orders been issued by the Navy Department they would have been obeyed at all hazard; but they came not. In their stead suggestions of an impracticable character were made; and, being only suggestions, Commodore Tattnall treated them as such, and tested them by the standard of his own superior knowledge and enlarged experience. It would really appear, in the light of subsequent events, as though the Secretary, over-estimating her power, was blindly bent upon the destruction of this vessel. Great store was laid by her. In the estimation of not a few,—partially informed,—she was deemed competent to almost any achievement.

It will be noted that in response to certain inquiries propounded by Commodore Tattnall touching the construction of the *Atlanta*, the contractor produced a letter from the Secretary of the Navy stating that he, the contractor, had full authority to act independently of all persons save the Secretary himself. This was, to say the least of it, a most novel and extraordinary proceeding. The ship was being remodeled and armed upon the station for whose waters she was designed as a main defense, and yet the officer in command of that station was not to interfere even by inquiry or suggestion. This was more than the Commodore could tolerate, and the Secretary of the Navy was fully advised of his views in the premises.

Commander Page,—who relieved Commodore Tattnall of the command afloat,—was an officer of merit and experience. The Navy Department evidently thought and hoped that he would be controlled by its suggestions and oblique hints in reference to the conduct of the naval vessels committed to his charge. Like Commodore Tattnall, however, in matters involving life and death, grave responsibility, and the honor of the service, he preferred to be governed by his professional judgment and experience. He did not propose, for the gratification of an expectant public and to satisfy a fretting department, to indulge in a naval spectacle regardless of its probable termination. As Commodore Tattnall had stated before, so now did Commander Page repeat to the Secretary that in professional matters, so long as he was permitted its exercise, he would be governed by his own best judgment. At the same time he distinctly confessed that he was prepared to render prompt and rigid obedience to any positive order which might be issued, whether it accorded with his views or not. This did not jump with the wishes of the Navy Department, always ready to claim credit for every successful action, but unprepared to assume responsibility, and by innuendo frequently interfering with the well considered plans of its leading officers.

Commander Page was in turn relieved, and Lieutenant Webb promoted over the heads of brother officers and assigned to the command.

The *Atlanta* was originally the *Fingal*. She was an iron steamer which, early in the war, had run the blockade, bringing to Savannah arms and ammunition. On the 23d of December, 1861, Commodore Tattnall, with his little fleet, had attempted to convoy her to sea by the way of Warsaw sound. The enemy's war vessels appearing in



force on the coast and subsequently maintaining a constant lookout for her, the enterprise was abandoned and the *Fingal* returned to Savannah, where she was subsequently converted into an iron-clad, and her name changed to the *Atlanta*. She was armed with a battery of four guns. Two of them,—seven-inch Brooke rifles,—were mounted on bow and stern pivots. The other two,—six-inch rifles,—were mounted in broadside. The seven-inch guns were so arranged that they could be worked either as broadside or as bow and stern guns. Her crew consisted of some twenty-one officers and one hundred and twenty-four men. She was well furnished with stores of all sorts. Such was her condition when Commander Webb steamed past the abandoned batteries on Skidaway Island to deliver battle to the Federal iron-clads *Weehawken* and *Nahant*, which, in Warsaw sound, awaited her coming. When within six hundred yards of the former she ran aground, but was quickly backed off. Boldly holding her course she got aground a second time, and, in this unfortunate situation, from which the most strenuous efforts failed to extricate her, commenced the action. Unable to bring her guns to bear with any degree of accuracy upon the *Weehawken* which approached within short range, and, choosing her position, opened fire with her fifteen-inch guns, she received four shots which knocked off the pilot-house, drove in a port stopper, seriously damaged the armor and wood backing, and wounded sixteen men,—among them two of the three pilots on board. Perceiving his hopeless condition, Commander Webb was forced to surrender. The engagement lasted only about sixteen minutes, and thus ended the career of the *Atlanta*.

Her sad fate justified the predictions of Commodore Tatnall and Commander Page.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH.

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Engaged in supervising the construction of Confederate war vessels at Savannah. Capture of the United States steamer *Water-Witch*. Ordered to destroy all naval vessels at the station if Savannah fell. Report of his action in obedience to these instructions. Retreats from Savannah, in December, 1864, with Lieutenant-General Hardee. In Augusta, Georgia, until the surrender of General Joseph E. Johnston. After being parolled, returns to Savannah. Letter to General Robert E. Lee. General Lee's response. Removes to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Again in Savannah. Appointed Inspector of that Port.

Commodore Tattnall continued to exercise the command of the shore station, which was of importance only in the efforts he made to build vessels of a class superior to the *Atlanta*. This was done under contract with Mr. Willink, an energetic ship-carpenter and naval constructor of probity and repute. Thus was the *Savannah* built, and the *Milledgeville* was approaching completion when Savannah passed into the possession of the Federals. The sameness of the naval service in these waters was on one occasion relieved by an exploit of considerable merit.

At half-past one o'clock, on the morning of the 2d of June, 1864, a boat expedition, under the command of Lieutenant Pelot of the Confederate Navy, after a desperate hand to hand encounter of some fifteen minutes, succeeded in boarding and capturing the United States steamer *Water-Witch* in Ossabaw sound. This vessel formed one of the blockading squadron on the Georgia coast, and carried a battery of four guns. The attacking party numbered eighty men, conveyed in seven barges. The brave young commander, who was the first to gain the steamer's deck, was

shot through the heart while contending most gallantly with the enemy. In this affair the Confederates lost six killed and twelve wounded. The Federal loss aggregated two killed and fifteen wounded. Among the latter was Lieutenant Pendergrast, commanding. The entire crew, numbering eighty men, and the vessel were safely conveyed within the Confederate lines.

On the 10th of December, 1864, in anticipation of the early evacuation or capture of Savannah, Commodore Tatt-nall received the following dispatch :

“RICHMOND, 10th December, 1864,

“VIA COURIER FROM HARDEEVILLE.

“To Captain JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Commanding Station :

“Should Savannah fall, do not permit our vessels under construction or any of the public property in your charge to fall into the hands of the enemy. Destroy everything when necessary to prevent this.

“S. R. MALLORY,

“Secretary of the Navy.”

To the execution of this order he gave his personal supervision on the eve of the evacuation of the city of Savannah by the Confederate forces under Lieutenant-General Hardee. His report to the Department we give in full :

“AUGUSTA, GEORGIA, 17th January, 1865.

“SIR: In obedience to your order of the 30th December, ultimo, which followed me to this place from Charleston, I furnish you a statement of the destruction of the public property under my charge at Savannah, including the vessels on the stocks and those not completed, and also what became of the naval and ordnance stores.

“The *Milledgeville*, the steamer constructed by Mr. Wil-  
link and which had been recently launched, was burnt to  
the water’s edge and sunk in the middle of the river, where  
I had anchored her to prevent accident from fire to the  
property in the vicinity. In the expectation of getting her  
up the river, in which, as I reported to you I was disap-  
pointed, I had placed some provisions and a few other  
unimportant articles on board of her for the use of the  
squadron. The provisions, however, had all been trans-  
ferred to the squadron, and but little was lost in her.

“The ship on the stocks at the yard of Krenston &  
Hawkes, I had intended to throw off the stocks as I feared  
danger to the neighboring houses if I burnt her. Disap-  
pointed, however, by nearly all the force I had relied on  
to effect it, I, at the last moment, fired her, and she was  
consumed.

“Some thirty or thirty-five tons of coal were left as it  
could not be destroyed or removed, all communication with  
Thomasville having been cut off by the enemy; and, indeed,  
the coal would have been required by the squadron had  
the siege been continued.

“The property sent to Thomasville consisted chiefly of  
a large quantity of paint, one thousand sheets of sheathing  
copper, and some blocks, with a very small quantity of  
provisions.

“The stock of everything in store at Savannah was very  
small, nothing having been received from Albany for some  
time, owing to the interruption of the communication by  
the enemy.

“A small stock of provisions had been kept on hand for  
the use of the marines who were in the trenches. When  
preparations were making for the evacuation, this was dis-

tributed in equal quantities among the families of the officers that were obliged to remain behind, and who would otherwise have been destitute. The understanding was that they were to be held subject to the order of the quartermaster of the marines, and not to be used until the enemy had entered the city. In the latter case, the officers were to be accountable to the Secretary of the Navy for their value, or return in kind. Receipts were taken for the same by the navy store-keeper. Four families received the benefit of this arrangement, of which *my own* was one. The apportionment consisted of one barrel of flour, two of bread, and one of beef.

“The ordnance stores sent to Thomasville consisted of all the powder and shells on the station, and the pivot gun of the captured steamer *Water-Witch*. I do not know the quantity of the powder and shells, but Lieutenant Oliver’s last report to the ordnance officer will inform you.

“I am, sir, respectfully,

“Your obedient servant,

“JOSIAH TATTNALL,

“Captain Confederate States Navy.”

“Captain S. S. Lee,

“Confederate States Navy,

“In charge of Bureau of Orders and Detail.”

Commodore Tattall was among the last to leave Savannah when she passed into the possession of General Sherman’s advancing columns. In company with two others, in an open boat, he pulled down the river to Screven’s ferry, and there went on board the iron-clad *Savannah*,—Commander Brent. Landing from the vessel just previous to her destruction, he marched to Hardeeville where the retreating Confederates were ordered to concentrate. Thence

he proceeded to Charleston, and, after communicating with the Government at Richmond, went to Augusta, Georgia, where he remained awaiting orders until the surrender of General Joseph E. Johnston.

On the 9th of May, 1865, he was regularly paroled as a prisoner of war, and shortly afterwards returned to Savannah.

There he remained until late in the spring of 1866.

During this period he was frequently consulted by officers of the army and navy, and by citizens, as to the course they had best pursue in view of the President's proclamations and the unsettled condition of affairs. Learning that General Lee had applied for a pardon, and desiring the opinion of that pure and noble man and great Captain, he addressed him the following communication :

“SAVANNAH, GA., 23d August, 1865.

“GENERAL :

“I am a paroled prisoner of war under the capitulation of General Joseph E. Johnston.

“I am, occasionally, consulted by junior officers of the navy as to the proper course to be adopted in the present crisis, and have advised those who are privileged, to frankly accept the President's amnesty, and to take the oath of allegiance in good faith. I, however, and others, specially debarred the benefit of the amnesty, are placed on a different footing, and, as I understand it, are required to apply for pardon or clemency, two words which imply a crime committed. Now, when in due course of law it shall be decided that the South has committed treason, I shall readily acknowledge the validity of the decision and make all honorable amends in my power; but, until then, I have

thought it due to my self respect not to acknowledge the authority of any man, however exalted (meaning the President), or of any body of men, however august (meaning the Congress), to denounce me as a traitor.

“There is, however, another consideration, stronger than a personal one, which has hitherto been an insurmountable obstacle to my becoming an applicant for pardon. Although I disapproved entirely of secession, and had to give evidence to that effect before a jury at Savannah a year after the commencement of the war, still, as I accepted a commission signed by President Davis, I considered it, and still consider it my duty to support him as my commander-in-chief and the exponent of the political principles of the Southern Confederacy. He is, it seems, to be tried for treason, and I cannot consent to take a step, for my personal benefit, which may jeopard his safety. To apply for pardon is to acknowledge treason, and this acknowledgment by the leading political men and the senior officers of the army and navy of the Confederacy, in advance of his trial, may seriously influence the jury, and seems to me equivalent to turning States evidence against him.

“I know but little of Mr. Davis personally, having met him but thrice, and each time but for a few minutes. I should not, I think, be likely to recognize him on the streets. I am influenced solely by the considerations I have stated.

“I have taken the liberty to address you in consequence of a statement in a New York paper (the *National*) that you had applied for a pardon, but ‘had made no abject submission, but had accompanied the petition for pardon with a full statement of those things which had made his (your) past conduct seem right and proper, and had avowed his (your) unchanging devotion to his (your) former prin-

ciples.' In view of the politics of the paper in which this was published, I discredited it, but from a letter of General Wade Hampton, recently published, I am led to think there may be some truth in it.

"I am induced, therefore, to hope that you have happily suggested a course which removes the obstacles from my path; and feeling assured that a step which you have taken must be honorable and a fitting example, I beg that you will, at your leisure, favor me with your views on the subject for the benefit of myself and those who consult me.

"I am out of the world here, and have no one with whom I can interchange views, and while tenacious on a point of honor and official propriety, I do not wish to appear so in regard to mere forms or trifles.

"I am, General,

"Very respectfully and truly yours,

"JOSIAH TATTNALL."

"General R. E. Lee,

"Cartersville, Virginia."

The following is General Lee's reply :

"NEAR CARTERSVILLE, VA., 7th Sept., 1865.

"SIR: I have received your letter of the 23d ultimo, and in reply will state the course I have pursued under circumstances similar to your own, and will leave you to judge of its propriety. Like yourself, I have, since the cessation of hostilities, advised all with whom I have conversed on the subject, who come within the terms of the President's proclamations, to take the oath of allegiance and accept in good faith the amnesty offered. But I have gone farther, and have recommended to those who were



excluded from their benefits, to make application, under the *proviso* of the proclamation of the 29th May, to be embraced in its provisions.

“Both classes, in order to be restored to their former rights and privileges, were required to perform a certain act, and I do not see that an acknowledgment of guilt is expressed in one more than the other.

“The war being at an end, the Southern States having laid down their arms, and the questions at issue between them and the Northern States having been decided, I believed it to be the duty of every one to unite in the restoration of the country and the reestablishment of peace and harmony. These considerations governed me in counsels I gave to others, and induced me, on the 13th of June, to make application to be included in the terms of the amnesty proclamation. I have not received an answer, and cannot inform you what has been the decision of the President. But whatever that may be, I do not see how the course I have recommended and practised can prove detrimental to the former President of the Confederate States. It appears to me that the allayment of passion, the dissipation of prejudice, and the restoration of reason, will alone enable the people of the country to acquire a true knowledge, and form a correct judgment of the events of the past four years. It will, I think, then be admitted that Mr. Davis has done nothing more than all the citizens of the Southern States, and should not be held accountable for acts performed by them in the exercise of what had been considered their unquestionable right. I have too exalted an opinion of the American people to believe that they will consent to injustice; and it is only necessary, in my opinion, that truth should be known, for the rights of every

one to be secured. I know of no surer way of eliciting the truth than by burying contention with the war.

"I enclose a copy of my letter to President Johnson, and feel assured that however imperfectly I may have given you my views on the subject of your letter, your own high sense of honor and right will lead you to a satisfactory conclusion as to the proper course to be pursued in your own case. With great respect and esteem,

"I am your most obedient servant,

"R. E. LEE."

"Captain Josiah Tattnall,

"Savannah, Georgia."

Finding the cost of living in Savannah beyond his means, and a residence there in the unsettled condition of affairs proving in some respects unpleasant,—especially to the ladies of his family,—he resolved to seek a domicile in the Province of Nova Scotia. Careful to take no step which by any possibility could be construed into an unauthorized enlargement of his parole, he first applied to the War Department for leave to make this change of habitation. On the 12th of June, 1866, formal permission was granted, and for the ensuing four years the Commodore and his family resided near Halifax. Although living in quietude and frugality, he was the recipient of constant and marked attentions from the prominent citizens of and visitors to that place. His pecuniary resources being well nigh exhausted, committing his family to the care of his surviving and beloved son, he returned to Savannah to seek employment. It was a brave sight,—this noble old man, bent with age and infirmities, but with eye still flashing with its wonted fires, and with spirit undaunted, in quest of

honorable labor in the home of his youth! Although treading upon the verge of the longest period allotted to human life, he could not put the harness from him.

On the 5th of January, 1870, the Mayor and City Council of Savannah created for him the office of *Inspector of the Port of Savannah*, with a salary of twelve hundred dollars per annum. This position he held for seventeen months, when it was vacated by his lamented demise. Of this office he was the only incumbent. For him was it called into being, and with him it expired.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH.

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Death. Resolutions of the City Council of Savannah. Committee of arrangements, and pall-bearers. Order of arrangements for the obsequies. Ceremonies observed. Burial. Public tributes. Closing hours. Captain Whittle's sketch of Commodore Tattnall.

Commodore Tattnall died in the city of Savannah on the 14th of June, 1871. The immediate cause of his death was general debility, complicated by a congestion of the brain. For some months he had been in failing health.

Upon the announcement of his demise a general gloom settled upon the community. All vessels in the harbor displayed their flags at half mast. The City Council convened to give expression to the public grief and make suitable arrangements for the funeral of the honored dead.

At that meeting the following preamble and resolutions were unanimously adopted :

“Our venerable and distinguished fellow-citizen, Josiah Tattnall, has just terminated a long life marked by the most exalted virtues. Though in the course of nature his days could not have been much prolonged, the intelligence of his death is received by the City Council of Savannah with that emotion which always attends the loss of such eminent examples of public and private worth. It is meet that in this, the city of his nativity, and among those to whom his name and fame are dearest, peculiar honors should be paid to his memory : therefore be it

“*Resolved*, That this Council does hereby vote a public funeral to the late Commodore Josiah Tattnall, to be conducted under the direction of a committee of Aldermen and citizens.

*Resolved*, That this body, with its officers, attend the funeral, and that the citizens generally be requested also to attend.

*Resolved*, That the city offices be closed, and that the citizens be requested to close their places of business, so far as practicable, on the day of the obsequies.

*Resolved*, That the Council Chamber and the staves of the Police Court be draped in mourning during the space of thirty days."

Upon motion, the following committee of arrangements was appointed by his Honor, Mayor John Screven :

"ALDERMEN.—Jno. O. Ferrill, Chairman ; E. C. Anderson, Jr., R. H. Footman, John T. Ronan, A. Haywood.

"CITIZENS.—Colonel E. C. Anderson, Chairman ; Geo. L. Cope, Colonel J. S. Claghorn, R. N. Gourdin, Major W. H. Wiltberger, L. J. Guilmartin, Major J. F. Wheaton, Hon. R. D. Arnold, Dr. J. B. Read, George S. Owens, Hon. R. T. Gibson, J. H. Estill, J. R. Sneed, E. L. Beard, Colonel W. R. Symons, Colonel J. F. Waring, Colonel C. H. Olmstead, A. F. Butler, General G. P. Harrison, Colonel R. A. Wayne, Colonel R. J. Davant, Jr., Colonel Charlton H. Way, John Stoddard, Major George W. Anderson, Jr., Major Henry Bryan, Major A. L. Hartridge, Wm. Hunter, Wm. Neyle Habersham, J. W. Lathrop, Colonel Wm. M. Wadley, Hon. Wm. Schley, Wm. Duncan, Charles Green, John L. Villalonga, E. A. Soullard, Hon. Julian Hartridge, Hon. Solomon Cohen, John McMahan, Geo. C. Freeman, A. A. Solomons, Major C. A. Withers, Major John Lama, Major P. H. Behn, Hon. Wm. B. Fleming, G. B. Lamar, Jr., Aug. P. Wetter, John R. Wilder, Wm. B. Hodgson, W. C. O'Driscoll.

"GENERAL OFFICERS.—Generals J. E. Johnston, Henry C. Wayne, J. F. Gilmer, A. R. Lawton, H. R. Jackson, Mans-

field Lovell, R. H. Anderson, G. M. Sorrel, W. W. Kirkland, J. J. Dickinson, Joseph Finegan.

“NAVAL OFFICERS.—Colonel Edward C. Anderson, Captain J. S. Kennard, Lieutenant Julian Myers, Lieutenant E. M. Anderson, Dr. Thomas M. Charlton, Midshipman H. T. Minor, Midshipman Gilbert C. Wilkins.

“CONSULAR.—Hon. Wm. Tasker Smith, H. B. M. Consul.”

The following gentlemen were requested by the family to act as pall-bearers:

General Joseph E. Johnston, General A. R. Lawton, Lyde Goodwin, Wm. H. Bulloch, Captain J. S. Kennard, Captain J. Rutledge, Lieutenant Julian Myers, Lieutenant E. M. Anderson, Midshipman H. T. Minor, Midshipman G. A. Wilkins, Paymaster P. M. DeLeon, Alderman E. C. Anderson, Jr., Alderman W. S. Basinger, Wm. M. Sneed.

This order of arrangements for the obsequies was agreed upon and announced:

“The procession will be formed in the following order, at 4 o'clock P. M., on Congress street, under command of General R. H. Anderson, the right resting in front of the northern entrance to the Screven House, the line facing north:

“1. The Washington Cornet Band.

“2. The police force of the city.

“3. The officiating clergy.

“4. Hearse and Pall-bearers—General J. E. Johnston, General A. R. Lawton, Lyde Goodwin, Wm. H. Bulloch, Captain J. S. Kennard, Captain J. Rutledge, Lieutenant E. M. Anderson, Lieutenant Julian Myers, Midshipman W. M. Sneed, Midshipman H. T. Minor, Midshipman G. A. Wilkins, Paymaster P. M. DeLeon, Alderman E. C. Anderson, Jr., Alderman W. S. Basinger.

“5. The family and relatives of deceased.

“6. The Reverend Clergy of all demoninations.

“7. Naval officers.

“8. Savannah Volunteer Guards.

“9. Officers, soldiers, and seamen of the late Confederate army and navy.

“10. The Mayor and Aldermen of the city of Savannah, together with the city officers.

“11. Foreign Consuls.

“12. Members of the Press.

“13. Various societies of the city.

“14. Citizens at large.

“15. Officers and crews of vessels in port.

“16. The Fire Companies in uniform, without engines and apparatus, under direction of officers of the department.

“Captains of vessels in port are requested to display their colors at half-mast during the day.

“The exchange bell, and the bells of the different churches will be tolled from half-past 3 P. M. to 5 o'clock P. M.

“The Mayor and Aldermen, together with the Committee of Arrangements, will convene at the Mayor's office at 3 P. M.

“The Reverend Clergy of all denominations are respectfully invited to unite in the procession, occupying the position assigned them.

“JOHN O. FERRILL,

“Chairman Committee of Council.

“EDWARD C. ANDERSON,

“Chairman Committee of Citizens.”

“JAMES STEWART, Secretary.”

The funeral of the late Commodore Tattnall was solemnized on the afternoon of the 16th of June, 1871. A larger or more imposing ceremony, of that mournful character, the

city never witnessed. Of the entire population there was a general outpouring to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of the dead hero.

From one of the city papers of the ensuing day we extract this account of the ceremonies observed on that occasion :

“The funeral of the late Commodore Tattnall took place yesterday afternoon from Christ Church. It was one of the largest that has ever taken place in our city.

“According to previous arrangements the committee of Aldermen and citizens assembled at the Exchange, and marched to the residence of Mrs. Kollock, corner of South Broad and Barnard streets, where the corpse lay, and escorted it to the Church, at which a large concourse of people had assembled; the police force and Sabre Club, under the command of General R. H. Anderson, drawn up in line on Congress street, saluting as the corpse passed into the Church, and the Washington Cornet Band playing a solemn dirge; the choir inside the Church also chanting a requiem.

“The Bishop and Clergy of the Episcopal Church met the pall-bearers at the door and preceded them down the aisle slowly, Bishop Beckwith repeating the service of the Church in a very solemn and impressive manner. The body was then deposited in the Chancel, and the Reverend Samuel Benedict read the funeral services. Bishop Beckwith then proceeded to address the audience upon the life and deeds of the dead hero who lay confined before him, and whose many friends and admirers were there to pay a last tribute of respect to his memory. He said that it was with much reluctance that he had complied with the request of the City Council in attempting to perform



the task which was required of him, and proceeded then, in a few very eloquent remarks, to portray the gallant deeds of the great man who had gone to his rest, describing in the most graphic and interesting manner the many events of the life of the Midshipman of 1812, and of the succeeding periods of his life upon the waters of the different hemispheres and under almost every sun; not failing to refer to the noble act of intercession in Chinese waters, by which he saved the honor of England's flag, saying at the time that 'human blood was thicker than water.' But, said the Bishop, this is not a theme for the Bishop of the Church, before whom is brought all that is mortal of one of her children. These are subjects for the orator and the historian. He felt that his duty was to speak of other subjects in connection with the life of Commodore Tattnall; and he then described in most beautiful and touching language the simple and childlike later life of the old hero, and his calm and resigned manner at the announcement by his physician that his departure for another world was near, saying to his pastor that he was glad of it.

"To give a synopsis even of the very impressive and eloquent discourse of Dr. Beckwith, would be impossible. In concluding, the distinguished divine said that after a long life and one marked by such eventful scenes he was to be literally brought back to the very spot upon which he had first commenced his existence; the grand old oaks that witnessed his childhood's days were still waiting to welcome him back to rest beneath the shadow of their spreading arches. These closing remarks were clothed in language unsurpassed in beauty, and the picture, drawn as with the pencil of the most graphic artist, was perfect, simple, natural, and beautiful. It seemed as though the battle-scarred veteran was

truly returning to a home and loving friends who waited to welcome him.

"The services over, the pall-bearers took up the coffin, and, the long procession having moved out of the Church, entered the carriages, buggies, and other vehicles provided for their accommodation. The line then moved down Drayton street to South Broad, thence to East Broad, and on the Thunderbolt road.

"THE FUNERAL CORTEGE.

"The procession moved from the Church, under the command of the General Marshal, in the following order :

"Savannah Sabre Club.

"Metropolitan detachment of Artillery, under command of Captain Thos. A. Maddox.

"Citizens on horseback.

"General Marshal, Aids, and Orderlies.

"Washington Cornet Band.

"Savannah Police Force.

"Savannah Volunteer Guards in citizens' dress.

"Carriages with the officiating Clergymen.

"Hearse.

"Carriages with Pall-bearers.

"Carriages with the late Commodore's family.

"Carriages with Mayor and Aldermen, committee, and citizens.

"Buggies.

"At the toll-gate, General Anderson's force and a portion of the detachment of those old veterans, the Savannah Volunteer Guards, of which the deceased had been an honored member for upwards of half a century, were dismissed, and the solemn cavalcade proceeded onward to the place of interment. Many persons on foot followed the

cortege. Arriving at Bonaventure, the procession slowly moved up the northern avenue—the mossy branches forming a majestic arch over the remains of the departed hero and those who were moving on to see his beloved form consigned to the tomb where his honored ancestry lay.

“AT THE TOMB.

“The place of burial was the family lot of the Tattnalls, where, for more than a century and a quarter, the ancestors of the lamented dead had found a resting place. In the enclosure is a monument erected to their first Captain, Edward Fenwick Tattnall, a brother of the deceased, by the Savannah Volunteer Guards. A large slab marks the place where rest the remains of Commodore Tattnall’s father and mother, and a brother and a sister, all buried in one grave. A grave opened at the side of the latter received all that was mortal of the deceased.

“The casket was carried by the pall-bearers into the enclosure, when the Reverend Samuel Benedict and the Reverend J. M. Mitchell read the beautiful burial service of the Episcopal Church over the remains, which were then lowered into their last earthly home. The assembly here sung the hymn, ‘Nearer my God, to Thee,’ at the conclusion of which the grave was filled up. The Savannah Sabre Club took a position, at the commencement of the services, east of the enclosure, and presented sabres. The Metropolitan detachment, under the command of Captain T. A. Maddox, in charge of the artillery, then fired a Commodore’s salute, of thirteen guns.

“After the salute was fired, the vast multitude slowly retired from the cemetery, leaving the old hero to rest beneath the trees under which he had played in boyhood,

and by the side of those of his kindred who had gone before. May the noble live oaks which were planted in Bonaventure to commemorate the marriage of the first of his name upon the soil of Georgia, chant a perpetual requiem over his grave."

Thus did the city of Savannah pay the highest funeral honors to her illustrious son. Aside from tributes of respect submitted by the societies and associations of which the Commodore was a member, the daily journals were made the mediums of conveying to the public not a few expressions of individual reverence and admiration for the deceased. Let this serve as an example :

[FROM THE SAVANNAH REPUBLICAN.]

"Although it has been evident for some time past that the physical vigor of this noble veteran was fast failing, and that nature must soon succumb to the immutable decree, yet his friends were unwilling to anticipate his death as so near. The thought was put aside when it intruded itself, and all hoped that his inherent strength of constitution would save him to us much longer. So that when it was announced on Wednesday night that '*Commodore Tatt-nall was dead,*' a sudden pang shocked the entire heart of this community. It was like the fall of one of the mighty oaks of Bonaventure in the midnight stillness of the forest. Seldom has such genuine and universal sorrow been evoked by the death of one of such ripe years, so many of whose contemporaries,—who knew and loved him well,—have passed away. The sad truth is before us, '*Tatt-nall is dead.*' The heart that never throbbed with an ignoble or ungenerous impulse has ceased to beat. The spirit that never conceived, the tongue that never uttered an unworthy sen-

timent, and the hand that never did an unmanly action are of this world no longer. His venerable form, stately though bent, dignified, though ruined, disappears henceforth from among us. We shall miss him with his genial smile, his friendly hand-grasp; the light of intelligence and benevolence that beamed from his expressive countenance; the instruction of his social conversation, enriched by so much thought and study and accurate observation. But he leaves something of precious value behind him after death. The noble example which the daily beauty of his life presented for more than half a century of toil, and care and responsibility, manifests to the youth of his country a guiding star to light them safely in the path of genius and nature's ambition. Few men can present at the close of such an extended life as Tattnall's, in such posts of honor and trust as he held, so pure and noble a record. This is a tribute of affection to Tattnall, and not intended as a record of the great acts of his life. His deeds have helped to make up some of the grandest parts of the history of his country. History must record them. None but a historian should do so. His private life is bound up in the hearts of his friends. His public life is a glorious and brilliant part of the warp and woof of the canvas in which history has woven the story of his country's glory. He was the *Bayard* of the South,—*sans peur et sans reproche*. He was the *Douglas* of the South, ever '*tender and true*,' and like the '*Douglas*,' he was in later years entitled to the cognomen of the '*Bleeding Heart*,' for *his* noble heart bled itself unto death for the woes and the wrongs of his own country. His remains will repose in the ancestral acres of Bonaventure, by the side of his chivalrous brother. He will sleep under the shade of those immemorial oaks,

planted by his remote progenitors. These noble old trees, renowned so long for natural beauty, will acquire henceforth a new significance and a richer glory. Spared by the storms,—saved by holy dedication from human desecration,—cherished and cultured by the rains and the dews of Heaven, they shall now fulfill their destiny, when with new dignity and glory and majesty they shall stand the faithful, unswerving, watchful sentinels who guard all the approaches to the tomb of Tattnall. No grander requiem has ever been sounded than that which the Southern winds shall breathe to his memory through the pendant mosses upon their limbs. Tattnall's tomb will henceforth be a place of pilgrimage.

“Such graves as his are pilgrim shrines—  
Shrines to no code or creed confined.  
The Delphian vales, the Palestines,  
The Meccas of the mind.”

“June 15, 1871.”

“H. W.”

The conduct of Commodore Tattnall during the closing hours of his life was in harmony with that calm heroism and self-possession which characterized him under all circumstances. Early in 1871 his strength began to fail. He grew weaker each day until the inception of the final illness which bore him away. Under all his pain and feebleness he manifested uniform patience. His spirits and cheerfulness he preserved to a wonderful degree. When, on the 9th of June, he was informed by his attending physicians that his attack would prove fatal, his response was, “I am glad of it.” This intelligence exerted no depressing influence upon him. Sending for his wife and daughters, calmly, and with his own lips, he announced to them the fact of his approaching dissolution. For his absent son and daughter he charged them with messages of love.

To the clergyman who was kindly offering the ministrations and consolations of religion he said, "Yes, I have reached the river Styx, and I think I have the penny." Expressing a firm conviction of the truth of Christianity, he received from his hands the Holy Communion, and declared his faith in the merits of a risen Saviour.

Of the members of his family and friends then present he took leave with a smile. This done, dismissing all cares from his mind, he called his devoted friend, Dr. Charlton,—who had served with him in the United States Navy and also in the Navy of the Confederate States,—and requested him to inject morphine in his arm and to keep him under its influence until death should supervene. This wish was observed, and the old hero,—all pain subdued and life's battle over,—passed into the world of spirits as gently as an infant falling on sleep.

We conclude this sketch with a portrait of Commodore Tattall painted by a brother officer who knew him well and served with and under him in his prime,—the late Captain William C. Whittle.

"In person, Commodore Tattall was about five feet ten and a half or eleven inches in height, and possessed a frame and figure indicative of great strength, activity, and endurance. His arms were long, which made him formidable with the sword, in the use of which,—and especially of the cutlass,—he was very expert. A superior shot with the pistol and rifle, he was fond of field sports and manly exercises. His face and head were on a grand scale. His features were massive, and when at rest their expression was grave, thoughtful, and occasionally abstracted; but without austerity or severity. His eyes were blue, large, and very expressive, and in moments of excitement blazed

with fire and animation. His countenance was singularly attractive and benevolent in its habitual expression, and there was a charm in his smile which it would be impossible to describe.

“Devoting little thought to the mere externals of dress, there was in his appearance the unmistakable look of the gentleman, with the careless, unstudied air of the seaman. In him the elements of the highest type of both were admirably blended and adjusted. In a word he was the sublime of ‘Jack Tar.’

“Unselfish, benevolent, and preëminently charitable and generous, malice and envy were unknown to the noble heart of my friend. Sensitively alive to the slightest shadow which even seemed to approach his own pure and unsullied honor, he was extremely delicate in his appreciation of the feelings of others. His heart was as tender as that of the gentlest woman, with an abundant treasure of sympathy for the distressed and the unfortunate. No man ever appreciated more justly, or acknowledged more readily, professional merit in another.

“His education,—the foundation of which was laid in a grammar-school in old England,—was thorough and classical so far as it went. This was proved by the style of his conversation, by the language in which he clothed his thoughts, and by his taste in reading. It was further exemplified by the character of the authors with whose works he filled his shelves on board ship.

“His conversational powers were very superior. In truth, his equal as a conversationalist I have rarely met with, and in the navy never except in the person of that distinguished officer, the late Commodore Crane.

“His familiar talk with his friends,—adorned by anecdote,



and a remarkable felicity of illustration, enlivened by humor, and sparkling with wit,—was genial and charming in the extreme. With an overflowing spirit of kindness at the helm, neither severity nor sarcasm ever entered there.

“He was devoted to his profession with an ardor and enthusiasm never surpassed. There never was a moment in his existence when he would have hesitated an instant to sacrifice his life on the altar of professional duty.

“It was a habit with him,—at least during his cruise, as a commanding officer, in the Mediterranean,—in the earlier watches of the night, attended by the friend who offers this meagre tribute to the memory of the heroic dead, to retire to the after cabin of his ship and discuss professional questions under supposed circumstances of difficulty and danger in which a ship-of-war might be placed, so that scarcely a contingency could arise, in professional experience, which could take him by surprise, or in which he was not prepared to act at once under the intelligent dictates of a previously well-considered determination.

“In after years, when in command of the United States ship *Saratoga*, he found himself, when only just out of the harbor of Portsmouth, in a most perilous position. The means of escape (not so apparent to a man of less judgment and decision) had been previously debated and decided on during our discussions in the Mediterranean. The decision then arrived at and adopted occurred to him at once and determined his course. No man that trod a deck ever came to a decision more promptly than he, or forced its execution through all opposing circumstances with more energy and resolution.

“On the night of which I speak he unhappily found himself on a lee-shore, in a heavy sea, during a terrific

gale, in shoal water which every moment was becoming shoaler. It was snowing heavily at the time, and the pilot on board had either lost or mistaken his lights. To have anchored the ship as she was, would have ensured her destruction and the loss of her noble crew. To 'claw off' had proved impossible, as he had pressed the gallant ship with canvass in the vain effort to work off until he had brought the lee-hammock-rail to the water. Something must be done and done promptly, or all would be lost. He did not hesitate a moment as to the only course left him, full as it was of the greatest hazard and difficulty in the execution, as every seaman will at once comprehend.

"Bending all his cables, clearing away every anchor, he determined to cut away his masts and to anchor. Having made the necessary preparations, and called the trustiest seamen of his crew around him in his cabin, he assigned to each his particular station and duty in the magnificent effort of seamanship which he had determined to attempt.

"Sending each to his station with a cheering word of confidence and encouragement which he knew so well how to speak, he repaired to the deck, of which he assumed the command, sent his officers to their different stations, and calmly awaited the favorable moment for the execution of his grand conception. That moment came and passed, but it did not pass unimproved; for, bringing the ship in the wind as rapidly as the heavily rolling sea on his bow would permit, he gave the order to cut. The masts went over to leeward, the anchors were let go, chains were veered, the ship brought up, and without the slightest accident or confusion on that crowded deck they were saved.

"I have thus attempted in my poor way to convey some idea of my appreciation of his great character. Let it be

remembered that except in early boyhood, at the close of the war with England, when he entered the navy of the United States, and in the war with Mexico which had no navy, opportunities for early training in combats with an enemy, and for gaining that experience and distinction which are acquired and won in the face of an enemy, were wanting to him. Had they been present with him as with Nelson, he would have been his equal. With a genius as great, with aspirations as lofty as those which inspired England's immortal son, his moral tone was incomparably purer and more exalted. He only wanted what Decatur called *opportunity* to have inscribed his name high up amongst those of the great naval men of the world.

“His perception was like the lightning's flash. The execution followed and with a force sufficient to overcome the resistance to be encountered. This rapidity of thought and action gave to his conduct, at times, in the estimation of more sluggish and less resolute characters, an appearance of rashness.

“There was not one particle of self-assertion in his composition. He was singularly modest and unassuming in his ordinary intercourse with society, and utterly free from everything like vanity or egotism.

“The point of honor was the pivot around which the elements of his chivalric character revolved, and from which there was no deviation.

“With a mind to conceive the boldest designs, and a courage which never blanched or hesitated in their execution, it may be said, without figure, of this Bayard of the seas, he was *sans peur et sans reproche*.”



## APPENDIX.

LONDON, July 27th, 1726.

TO ROGER FENWICK, ESQUIRE,

Little Isle, near Skibbereen,

County Cork, Ireland :

SIR: I was agreeably surpris'd at the receipt of your obliging letter dated the 17th of last month, which came to my hands the 13th of this month, especially since you were so kind to write it upon your hearing of my abode and name. You were pleas'd to acquaint me that the original of your family's settlement in Ireland was by your grandfather, Ralph Fenwick, who went into that Kingdom an officer in Cromwell's army, and that your father, Charles Fenwick, died soon after the revolution, leaving you a good estate, which I pray God may long continue in your family and name. And as you desire me to give you an account of our name and family, to which you say you are an entire stranger, I perceive you have never been in England yourself, and therefore I shall obey your commands in it, in the best and truest manner I can, as follows: The name of Fenwick is one of the most ancient names at this time in England, for it has been an eminent gentleman's family in the county of Northumberland ever since the time of our Saxon Kings, long before William the Conqueror's time, and the chief of the family lived from that time for several ages after at a place call'd Fenwick Tower, about ten or twelve miles from New Castle, higher up the river Tyne, and afterwards the posterity of that family removed from thence to another fine seat, (belonging to their estate),

called Wallington, which lies about seven miles north from the old Fenwick Tower, for which reason Fenwick Tower soon fell into decay, and there is now nothing of it but some small remains of the old ruins. The removal of the family from Fenwick Tower to Wallington was (I think) about the time of the reign of King Edward the III, where they flourished in a very eminent manner, possessed of a very large estate for several ages more, when the name began to branch out into several other families who were younger brothers to the House of Wallington, and they also were possessed of good estates; and the chief of these younger families was the House of Stanton, a seat about three miles from a place called Morporth, in Northumberland, and this family of Stanton was established, and separated from the Wallington family in the reign of King Harry the IV, and where they remain to this day, and is now the first family of the name, because the Wallington family became extinct at the death of Sir John Fenwick,—Baronet,—who was beheaded in the beginning of the year 1696, soon after the revolution, he being then accused of treasonable practices against King William in favor of the abdicated King James; and this Sir John Fenwick, three or four years before his death, sold all the estate and possessions that belonged to him, and which had been in his name and family near (1,000) one thousand years before, and he sent all the money that he received for it to King James into France,—so much was he begotting to the interest of that King and his party, to the ruin of himself and family. Thus far will serve to inform you of the origin and a general account of our name and family; therefore now I shall confine the remaining part of this letter to a more particular information of the Stanton family, from whence I am and

you also are descended, for doing which I think it will not be material to tell you the progress of the several generations of father and son from the time of the first settlement of that family. Therefore, I shall only begin from the time of my great-grandfather, William Fenwick, who was born at Stanton the 22d September, 1581, and died at the same place the 12th July, 1647. He left several children, but his eldest son (my grandfather) was Edward Fenwick, born at Stanton 29th October, 1606, and died there the 14th August, 1689; and your grandfather (Ralph Fenwick) was a younger brother of this Edward Fenwick, my grandfather, who had eleven children. His eldest son was Roger Fenwick, born at Stanton the 18th March, 1632, but he was killed at the siege of Dunkirk at an assault in mounting the breaches at Mardike, 1658—he being then Colonel of a regiment of horse. After this Roger Fenwick's death, my grandfather's second son, William Fenwick, became his heir, and married and died soon after, but left a son named Roger Fenwick, who inherited the Stanton estate after my grandfather's death. This Roger Fenwick also married, but died soon after, leaving a son named John Fenwick, who now inherits the Stanton estate, and is the first of the name and family. My father (Robert Fenwick) was the next son of my grandfather to William Fenwick above-mentioned; so that he being a younger brother had no provision made for him out of the family estate, but he married a gentlewoman of that county by whom he had a considerable fortune. My father had eight children, and I was his third son, but my father dying when we were young, we were all obliged to seek our own fortunes as we grew up. My eldest brother happened to be killed in a duel soon after he came to man's estate. My second brother went

into the army, a cornet in the horse service in the last wars, and he also happened to be so much wounded in the first engagement he was in, that he died soon after. I took my fortune another way and went into the East Indies, where I lived a merchant above eleven years, and where it pleased God to prosper my endeavors with a moderate fortune, with which about eight years ago I married very happily and settled here in London, where I have lived ever since; but I have no children of my own living; neither are there any of my father's children living but myself and my youngest brother, John Fenwick, who went into the West Indies about twenty years ago, and has acquired a very good estate in South Carolina, where he now lives in a married state, and has four or five children. The two eldest of them, a son and a daughter, are now in England under my care. Thus, sir, I have in a very full manner given you a large account, as well of myself as of our name and family, in compliance with your desire, so far as I could ever get any knowledge of; and if any part of this relation is not so plain and intelligible to you as I intend it, I will, upon your first notice, endeavour to do it better. I fear I have made this letter too long, and that it will be tedious and troublesome to you, but as I know not how to answer particularly what you desired of me in less room, so I hope you will excuse it. I shall be glad to continue a correspondence with you and to obey any commands wherein you think me capable of serving you here. My wife joins with me in our sincere respects to yourself and lady, so I take leave, for the present, to subscribe myself, dear sir,

Your very affectionate kinsman,

EDWARD FENWICK.



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