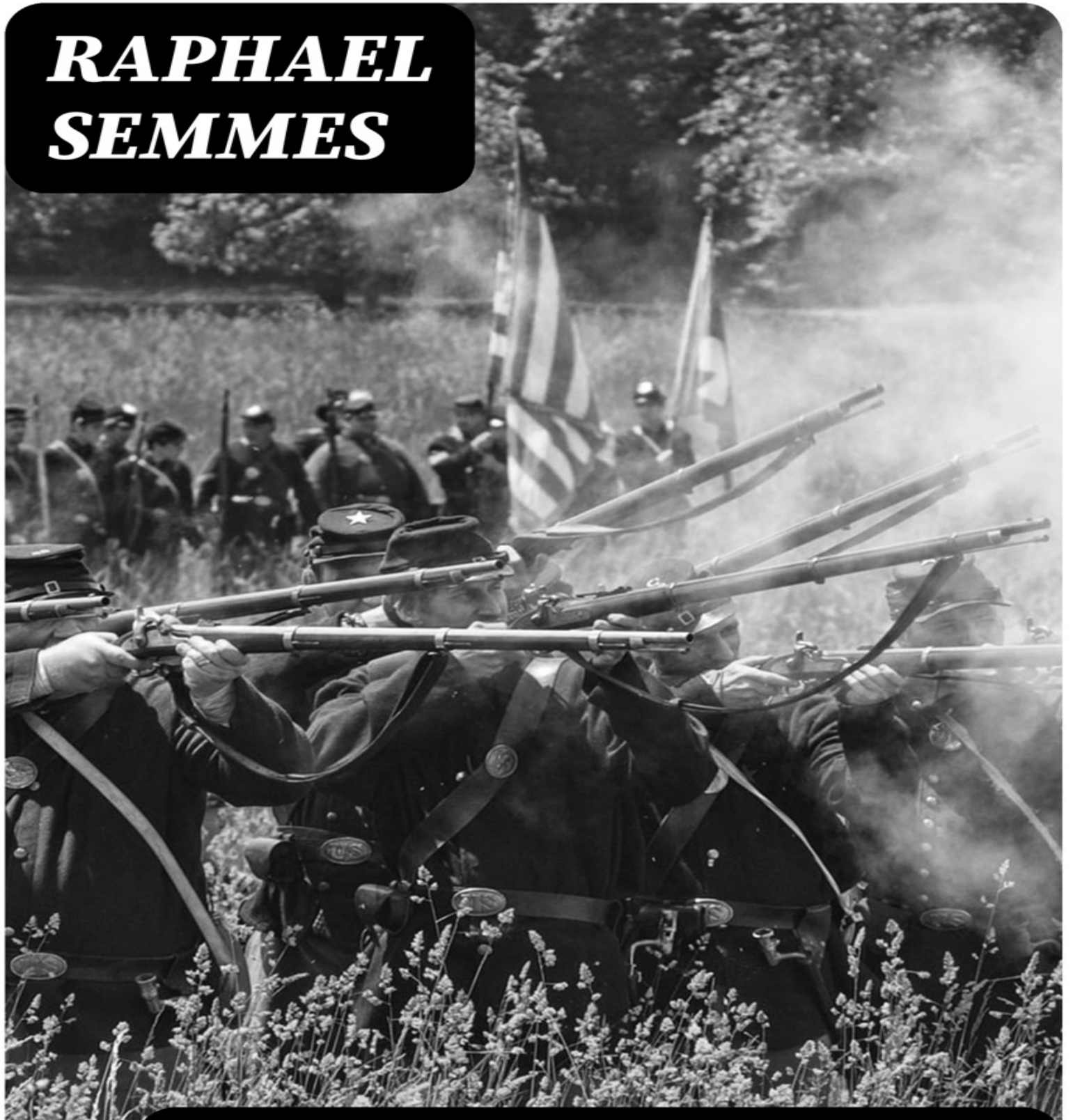


***RAPHAEL  
SEMMES***



***THE CRUISE  
OF THE ALABAMA  
AND THE SUMTER***

**Raphael Semmes**

# **The Cruise of the Alabama and the Sumter**

**From the Private Journals and Other Papers of  
Commander R. Semmes, C.S.N., and Other Officers**

EAN 8596547365761

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: [DigiCat@okpublishing.info](mailto:DigiCat@okpublishing.info)



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

[CRUISE OF](#)  
[CHAPTER I.](#)  
[CHAPTER II.](#)  
[CHAPTER III.](#)  
[CHAPTER IV.](#)  
[CHAPTER V.](#)  
[CHAPTER VI.](#)  
[CHAPTER VII.](#)  
[CHAPTER VIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER IX.](#)  
[CHAPTER X.](#)  
[CHAPTER XI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XVII.](#)  
[CASE OF THE LAFAYETTE.](#)  
[CHAPTER XVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXIV.](#)

[CHAPTER XXV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXVI.](#)  
[APPENDIX.](#)

# **CRUISE OF**

[Table of Contents](#)

# **THE ALABAMA AND THE SUMTER.**

# CHAPTER I.

## Table of Contents

*The Question at issue—An unexpected point of attack—Captain Semmes—The President's instructions—Creating a navy—From the old to the new—An important mission—Appointed to the Sumter—True character of the Confederate "pirate."*

The President of the American States in Confederation was gathering an army for the defence of Southern liberty. Where valour is a national inheritance, and an enthusiastic unanimity prevails, this will not prove a difficult task. It is otherwise with the formation of a navy. Soldiers of Southern blood had thrown up their commissions in a body; but sailors love their ships as well as their country, and appear to owe some allegiance to them likewise. Nevertheless, if Mr. Davis had not a great choice of officers, he had eminent men to serve him, as the young history of the South has abundantly shown. To obtain experienced and trusty seamen was easier to him in such a crisis than to give them a command. The Atlantic and the ports of America were ruled at that time absolutely by President Lincoln. The South had not a voice upon the sea. The merchants of New York and Boston looked upon the war as something which concerned them very little. Not a dream of any damage

possibly to be inflicted on them, disturbed the serenity of their votes for the invasion of the South. Their fleets entered harbour proudly; their marine swam the ocean unmolested. Though there was war imminent, the insurance offices were content to maintain their terms upon a peace standard. What, indeed, was to be feared? The South had not a single vessel. Here and there a packet-steamer might be caught up and armed, but what would they avail against such fleet and powerful ships as the Brooklyn, the Powhattan, and dozens of others? There was, then, a condition of perfect security, according to the ideas of all American commercial men. The arrangement, as they understood it, was that they were to strike the blow, and that no one was to give them the value in return.

It happened that Mr. Davis was of another mind. He perceived where a blow could be struck, on his part, with terrible emphasis, and how. The obstacles in his way were colossal; but we have learnt that obstacles do not appal his indomitable genius. On the 14th February, 1861, Captain Semmes, being then at his residence in the city of Washington, a Commander in the Federal navy, received the following telegram from Montgomery:—

SIR,—On behalf of the Committee on Naval Affairs, I beg leave to request that you will repair to this place at your earliest convenience.

Your obedient servant,  
C.M. CONRAD, *Chairman*.

The selection of Captain Semmes for the first hazardous service, whatsoever it might be, was due to his reputation and patriotism, as well as to the sagacity of the Confederate

chief. He had already, in a letter to the Hon. Alexander H. Stephens, expressed his willingness to fight for the South: "his judgment, his inclinations, and his affections," all hurrying him, as he says, to link his fate with the first movement of the South. "My fate," he pursues, "is cast with the South; but I should be unwilling, unless invited, to appear to thrust myself upon the new Government *until my own State* has moved." This was at that time the feeling of many border statesmen. In another letter to Mr. Curry he had exposed sound practical views of the situation of the Confederates, as regards their marine, for defence and means of inflicting damage on their opponents.

Captain Semmes at once replied that he would attend upon the committee immediately. His next act was respectfully to resign his commission as Commander in the Navy of the United States; which resignation was accepted in the same terms. He ceased similarly to be a member of the Lighthouse Board. These matters concluded, he telegraphed to the Hon. J.L.M. Curry, in Montgomery, where the Confederate States' Congress was sitting, that he was now a free man to serve his struggling country. Forthwith he was deputed by President Davis to return to the Northern States, and make large purchases and contracts "for machinery and munitions, or for the manufacture of arms and munitions of war;" as also to obtain "cannon and musket-powder, the former of the coarsest grain," and to engage with a certain proprietor of powder-mills for the "establishment of a powder-mill at some point in the limits of our territory." This letter gives a good idea of the business-like qualities brought by Mr. Davis to his high



office. "At the arsenal at Washington," he writes, "you will find an artificer named Wright, who has brought the cap-making machine to its present state of efficiency, and who might furnish a cap-machine, and accompany it, to explain its operations." Throughout the letter, which is full of minute instructions and weighty commissions, Mr. Davis shows the fullest confidence in the loyalty and fitness of the man in whom he placed trust.

Captain Semmes was engaged in the performance of these immediate duties, when a confidential communication from Mr. S.R. Mallory, of the Navy department, gave him warning of two or more steamers, of a class desired for present service, which might be purchased at or near New York—"steamers of speed, light draught, and strength sufficient for at least one heavy gun."

"The steamers are designed to navigate the waters and enter the bays and inlets of the coast from Charleston to the St. Mary's, and from Key West to the Rio Grande, for coast defences;" and Captain Semmes' judgment will need no further guide when he is told that "their speed should be sufficient to give them at all times the ability to engage or to evade an engagement, and that an 8 or 10-inch gun, with, perhaps, two 32, or, if not, two of smaller calibre, should constitute their battery."

The Captain's appointment as Commander in the Navy of the Confederate States, and taking of the oaths, followed in April. On the 18th of that month, Mr. Mallory detached him from the post he held, by appointment from the President, of Chief of the Lighthouse Bureau, with orders that he should proceed to New Orleans and take command of the

steamer Sumter. Captain Semmes saw clearly that war was coming. He perceived, at the same time, the means by which he could serve his country best. He set forth for New Orleans without delay.

Our readers will see, by-and-by, from the quotations we shall make from the Captain's Log, that he is as little the hungry fire-eater which many of his admirers suppose him to be, as he is the Black Pirate of the New York press. Captain Semmes is a native of Charles county, in Maryland, a State that has furnished numerous patriotic citizens to the South. Before accepting his new service he had taken honourable farewell of his old. The Federals had no charge to bring against him before the day when he stepped on the deck of the then unknown and insignificant Sumter steam-vessel. What they may have said later is of no particular consequence; nor can it be thought to be greatly to the discredit of Captain Semmes that they have cried out loudly, and as men in pain.

## CHAPTER II.

### [Table of Contents](#)

*The Sumter formerly the Savannah packet-ship—Captain Semmes joins and assumes command—Altering the vessel—Vexatious delays—The war begins—The river blockaded—Crew of the Sumter—Dropping down the river—An attempt—No pilots—Vigorous action—Sumter still at her anchors—Lamps removed from lighthouses—More enemy's ships—Orders on board the Sumter—False hopes—The 30th of June—A courageous pilot—The escape of the Sumter—The chase—The enemy baffled.*

The little vessel which now constituted the whole strength of the Confederate navy, was a merchant screw-steamer of 501 tons burthen. She had been hitherto known as the Havannah, and had plied as a packet-ship between the port of that name and New Orleans. She was now to be extemporized into a man-of-war, and in her new guise was to achieve a world-wide celebrity, and to play no unimportant part in the great struggle between North and South.

Arrived in New Orleans, Captain Semmes at once proceeded, in company with Lieutenant Chapman, to inspect his new command—of which he speaks with evident satisfaction as a "staunch and well-built" vessel. In her then

condition, however, she was by no means fitted for her new duties; and he accordingly devoted all his energies towards effecting the alterations necessary for that purpose. The first step was to disencumber her decks of the long range of upper cabins, thus materially increasing her buoyancy as a sea-boat, and diminishing the area exposed to the enemy's shot and shell. Then a berth-deck was laid for the accommodation of officers and crew, and the main deck renewed and strengthened to carry the heavy 8-inch shell-gun, mounted on a pivot between the fore and mainmasts, and the four 24 pounder howitzers of 13 cwt. each, to be mounted as a broadside battery. Additional coal-bunkers were also constructed, and a magazine and shell-room built in a suitable position, and these and a few other less important changes effected, the transformation was complete, and the little Sumter ready to proceed upon her work of devastation.

It must not, however, be imagined that all this was done without many and vexatious delays. The emergency had found the new Confederation altogether unprepared, and trouble and confusion were the inevitable result. Hitherto, everything had been done by the North. Up to the very last moment it had been believed that the separation of the two sections would be peaceably effected; and now the necessary works had to be hastily carried out by civilian workmen, under the direction of a department, itself as yet but provisionally and most imperfectly organized.

Sorely tried by the delays consequent upon this condition of affairs,

Captain Semmes commences his Diary as follows:—

*"New Orleans, May 24th.*—A month has elapsed since I began the preparation of the Sumter for sea, and yet we are not ready. Leeds and Co. have not given us our tanks, and we only received the carriage of the 8-inch gun to-day. The officers are all present, and the crew has been shipped, and all are impatient to be off. The river is not yet blockaded, but expected to be to-morrow. It must be a close blockade, and by heavy vessels, that will keep us in. Troops are being collected in large numbers in the enemy's States, marchings and counter-marchings are going on; and the fleet seems to be kept very busy, scouring hither and thither, but nothing accomplished. Whilst penning the last paragraph, news reaches us that the Lincoln Government has crossed the Potomac and invaded Virginia! Thus commences a bloody and a bitter war. So be it; we but accept the gauntlet which has been flung in our faces. The future will tell a tale worthy of the South and of her noble cause."

But the delays were not yet over. On the 27th May, the United States steamer Brooklyn made her appearance, and commenced the blockade of the river. The following day brought the powerful frigates Niagara and Minnesota to her assistance; and when on the 1st of June Captain Semmes began at length to look hopefully seawards, the Powhattan was discovered carefully watching the only remaining exit from the river.

One by one, however, the difficulties were fairly overcome, and the infant navy of the Confederate States was ready to take the sea. The Sumter's crew consisted of Captain Semmes, commanding, four lieutenants, a paymaster, a surgeon, a lieutenant of marines, four

midshipmen, four engineers, boatswain, gunner, sail-maker, carpenter, captain's and purser's clerks, twelve marines, and seventy-two seamen. Thus manned and equipped, she dropped down the river on the 18th June, and anchored off the Barracks for the purpose of receiving on board her ammunition and other similar stores. From thence she again proceeded on the same evening still lower down the river to Forts Philip and Jackson, where she brought up on the following day, to await a favourable opportunity for running the blockade.

For three days she remained at her new anchorage, this period of enforced inactivity being diligently employed in drilling and exercising the crew, and bringing the vessel generally into somewhat better order than her hurried equipment had as yet permitted her to assume. On the 21st June, however, intelligence was received that the Powhattan had left her station in chase of two vessels, and that a boat from the Brooklyn had passed into the river, and was making for the telegraph station. Captain Semmes at once decided to avail himself of this opportunity to escape to sea, and getting up steam, proceeded to Pass à L'Outre, and despatched one of his boats to the lighthouse for a pilot.

Here, however, an unexpected difficulty occurred. The light-house-keeper replied that he knew nothing of the pilots, and the Sumter was accordingly compelled again to bring up, whilst the Confederate privateer Ivy ran down, at Captain Semmes' request, to the South-west Pass, to endeavour to procure a pilot for her there. This expedition, however, met with no better success, and the Ivy returned with the information that the pilots refused to take charge of

the vessel. A further despatch was addressed to Captain Semmes, from the Captain of the House of Pilots, to the effect that "no pilots were now on duty."

It now became necessary to act with vigour, and the Ivy was accordingly again despatched to the South-west Pass. This time, however, she carried with her the first lieutenant of the Sumter, with the following peremptory message to the Master of the Pilot Association to repair immediately on board, and instructions, if any hesitation were evinced in complying with this command, to arrest the entire body and bring them off:—

C.S. steamer Sumter, Head of the Passes  
June 22nd, 1861.

SIR,—This is to command you to repair on board this ship with three or four of the most experienced pilots of the Bar. I am surprised to learn that an unwillingness has been expressed by some of the pilots of your Association to come on board the Sumter, and my purpose is to test the fact of such disloyalty to the Confederate States. If any man disobey this summons, I will not only have his Branch taken away from him, but I will send an armed force and arrest and bring him on board. I have the honour to be,

Very respectfully,

Your obedient Servant,

(Signed) R. SEMMES.

This extreme measure, however, was not found necessary. The mere threat was sufficient, and on the following day the master, with several of his pilots, made their appearance on board the Sumter. After a brief consultation with Captain Semmes, they one and all, with

the exception of the master, expressed their willingness to take the vessel to sea, and thereupon the captain, selecting one of the number for this service, permitted the remainder to depart.

Meanwhile, however, the golden opportunity had been lost; the Powhattan had returned to her station, and the harbour was again hermetically sealed. The Sumter, therefore, was again compelled to return to her anchors, and eight more days passed wearily away without affording another opportunity of evasion. The interval of expectation, however, was again occupied in drilling and exercising the crew, which was now beginning to get into good working order; measures being also taken for extinguishing and removing the lamps from the lighthouses at Pass à L'Outre and the South Pass, Captain Semmes addressing to the Navy Department at Richmond the following letter upon the subject:—

C.S. steamer Sumter, Head of the Passes,  
Miss. River, June 30th, 1861.

SIR,—I have the honour to inform the department that I am still at my anchors at the "Head of the Passes," the enemy closely investing both of the practicable outlets. At Pass à L'Outre there are three ships—the Brooklyn and another propeller, and a large side-wheel steamer; and at the South-west Pass there is the Powhattan, lying within half-a-mile of the Bar, and not stirring an inch from her anchors night or day. I am only surprised that the Brooklyn does not come up to this anchorage, which she might easily do (as there is water enough, and no military precautions whatever have been taken to hold it), and thus effectually



seal all the passes of the river by her presence alone, which would enable the enemy to withdraw the remainder of his blockading force for use elsewhere. With the assistance of the Jackson and McRae (neither of which has yet dropped down), I could probably hold my position here until an opportunity offered of my getting to sea. I shall watch diligently for such an opportunity, and have no doubt that, sooner or later, it will present itself. I found, upon dropping down to this point, that the lights at Pass à L'Outre and South Pass had been strangely overlooked, and that they were still burning. I caused them both to be extinguished, so that if bad weather should set in, the blockading vessel will have nothing "to hold on to," and will be obliged to make an offing. At present the worst feature of the blockade is that the Brooklyn has the speed of me, so that, even though I should run the bar, I could not hope to escape her unless I surprised her, which, with her close watch of the Bar, at anchor near to, both night and day, it will be exceedingly difficult to do. I should be quite willing to try speed with the Powhattan if I could hope to run the gauntlet of her guns without being crippled; but unfortunately, with all the buoys and other marks removed, there is a perfectly blind bar except by daylight. In the meantime I am drilling my gun-crew to a proper use of the great guns and small arms. With the exception of diarrhoea which is prevailing to some extent, brought on by too free a use of the river water in the excessive heats which prevail, the crew continue healthy.

\* \* \* \* \* I have the honour to be, &c., &c.,

(Signed) R. SEMMES.

Hon. G.E. Mallory, Secretary of the Navy, Richmond, Virginia.

The following orders were also issued:—

*"Orders to be Observed on Board the C.S. Steamer Sumter."*

"1. The deck will never be left without a lieutenant, except that in port a midshipman may be assigned to keep the first lieutenant's watch."

"2. The quarter-deck will at all times be regarded as a place of parade, and no sitting or lounging will be permitted thereon. For the purposes of this order all the spar deck abaft the mainmast will be regarded as the quarter-deck."

"3. Officers will wear their uniforms at all times when on board ship, and when on shore on duty."

"4. No officer will remain out of the ship after ten P.M. without the special permission of the commander."

"5. Each division of guns will be exercised at least three times a week; and there will be an exercise at general quarters twice a week, viz., on Tuesdays and Fridays."

"6. The crew will be mustered at quarters for inspection every morning at nine o'clock (except Sundays), and every evening at sunset."

"7. On Sundays there will be a general muster for inspection at eleven A.M., when the officers will appear in undress with epaulettes."

"8. The chief engineer is to keep the commander informed at all times (through the first lieutenant) of the condition of his engines, boilers, &c.; and he is to see that his assistants, &c., are punctual and zealous in the

performance of their duties, and report such as fail therein to the first lieutenant."

"9. There will be an engineer at all times on watch in the engine-room when the ship is under steam, and the engineer on watch will report every two hours to the officer of the deck how the engines are working, &c."

"10. The marine officer will drill his guard once every day when the weather is suitable, and the duty of the ship does not interfere therewith."

"11. The firemen will be exercised once a week, when the pumps, hose, &c., are to be adjusted, and used as in case of actual fire."

On the morning of the 29th of June hopes were again excited by a report from the pilot that the Brooklyn had left her station; and steam being got up with all speed on board the Sumter, she again dropped down to Pass à l'Outre, but only to find that the report had been fallacious. The Brooklyn was still at anchor, though a slight change of berth had placed her behind the shelter of a mass of trees. Once more, therefore, the Sumter was brought to an anchor; but on the day following, her patient waiting was rewarded by the long-looked-for opportunity. On the morning of the 30th of June the Brooklyn was again reported under way and in chase of a vessel to leeward; and no sooner was the fact of her departure fairly verified than steam was got up for the last time, and the little Sumter dashed boldly across the bar, and stood out to sea.

Almost at the last moment, however, it seemed as though the attempt to escape were again to be baffled by difficulties on the part of the pilot. The man on board of the

Sumter lost courage as the moment of trial came, and professed his inability to take the vessel through the pass thus left free by the departure of the Brooklyn, alleging as his excuse that he had not passed through it for more than three months. Happily the man's cowardice or treachery produced no ill effects; for, as the Sumter dropped down the river on her way towards the open sea, another pilot came gallantly off to her in his little boat, and volunteered to carry her through the Pass.

The Sumter had not reached within six miles of the bar when her movements were perceived from the Brooklyn, which at once relinquished the far less valuable prize on which she had been hitherto intent; and, changing her course, headed at top speed towards the bar, in hopes of cutting the Sumter off before she could reach it. The narrow opening through the bar, distant about six miles from either of the opposing vessels, now became the goal of a sharp and exciting race. The Sumter had the advantage of the stream: but the Brooklyn was her superior in speed, and moreover, carried guns of heavier calibre and longer range. At length the Pass is reached; and dashing gallantly across it, the little Sumter starboards her helm and rounds the mud-banks to the eastward! As she does so the Brooklyn rounds to for a moment and gives her a shot from her pivot gun. But the bolt falls short; and now the race begins in earnest!

The chase had not continued long, when a heavy squall of wind and rain came up and hid the pursuing vessel from sight; but it soon passed away, and the Brooklyn was again descried astern, under all sail and steam, and evidently

gaining upon her little quarry. On this the Sumter was hauled two points higher up, thus bringing the wind so far forward that the Brooklyn was no longer able to carry sail. And now the chase in her turn began to gain upon her huge pursuer. But she was now in salt water, and her boilers were beginning to "prime" furiously. It was necessary to slacken speed for a time, and as she did so the Brooklyn again recovered her advantage. Then gradually the foaming in the Sumter's boilers ceased, and she was again put to her speed. The utmost pressure was put on; the propeller began to move at the rate of sixty-five revolutions a minute, and the Brooklyn once more dropped slowly but steadily astern. At length she gave up the chase, and at four o'clock in the afternoon, just four hours after crossing the bar, the crew of the Sumter gave three hearty cheers as her baffled pursuer put up her helm, and, relinquishing the chase, turned sullenly back to her station at the mouth of the river.

## CHAPTER III.

### Table of Contents

*Beginning the cruise—The first prize the Golden Rocket—The capture burnt—The Cuba and Machias—Cienfuegos—The Ben Dunning and Albert Adams—Three at once: the West Wind, the Naiad, and the Louisa Kilham—A fleet of prizes—Saluting the Confederate States' flag—At Cuba—Strict neutrality—A prize agent—The Governor-General of Cuba—Recapture by the United States—An accident to the commander—A gale—At Curaçao—The Dutch Governor—An ex-president in difficulties—The Abby Bradford—Venezuela—An inhospitable port—The Joseph Maxwell—Military v. naval—Sagacious skipper—Gulf of Bahia.*

The Sumter had now fairly commenced her gallant career. The 1st July dawned bright and fair with, a light breeze from the south-west, and the little vessel sped through the water at an average speed of about eight knots an hour. All that day not a sail appeared in sight. Night settled down in all the calm splendour of the tropic seas, and nothing disturbed its serenity save the monotonous beating of the Sumter's propeller as she steered a southeasterly course down the Gulf of Mexico. The following day brought her safely to Cape Antonio, which she rounded

under sail and steam, and striking the trade-winds, hoisted up her propeller and stood away towards the west.

The afternoon of the 3rd July brought the Sumter her first prize. At about 3 P.M. a sail was descried in shore, beating to windward, and steering a course that would bring her almost into contact with the Confederate vessel. To avoid suspicion, no notice was taken of the stranger until the two vessels had approached within the distance of a little more than a mile from each other, when a display of English colours from the Confederate was answered by the stranger with the stars and stripes of the United States. Down came the St. George's ensign from the Sumter's peak, to be replaced almost before it had touched the deck by the stars and bars, which at that time constituted the flag of the Confederate States. A shot was fired across the bows of the astonished Yankee, who at once hove-to, and a boat was sent on board to take possession of the Sumter's first capture.

The prize proved to be the ship Golden Rocket, from the Yankee State of Maine—a fine ship of 690 tons burthen, only three years old, and worth from 30,000 to 40,000 dollars. She Was bound to Cienfuegos in Cuba, but had no cargo on board, and Captain Semmes, being unwilling at that early stage of his cruise to spare a prize crew, determined to destroy the vessel, and after taking the captain and crew on board the Sumter set the prize on fire and left her to her fate.[1]

[Footnote 1: "It was about ten o'clock at night when the first glare of light burst from her cabin-hatch. Few, few on board can forget the spectacle. A ship set fire to at sea! It

would seem that man was almost warring with his Maker. Her helpless condition, the red flames licking the rigging as they climbed aloft, the sparks and pieces of burning rope taken off by the wind and flying miles to leeward, the ghastly glare thrown upon the dark sea as far as the eye could reach, and then the death-like stillness of the scene—all these combined to place the Golden Rocket on the tablet of our memories for ever. But, notwithstanding the reluctance with which we did it, we would not have missed the opportunity for anything on earth. We wanted no war—we wanted peace; we had dear friends among those who were making war upon us, and for their sakes, if not for the sake of humanity, we hoped to be allowed to separate in peace; but it could not be; they forced the war upon us—they endeavoured to destroy us. For this, and for this alone, we burn their ships and destroy their commerce. We have no feeling of enmity against them, and all we ask is to be let alone—to be allowed to tread the path we have chosen for ourselves."—"Cruise of the Sumter," from the "Index" May 1st, 1862.]

The following day saw two more prizes fall into the Sumter's hands. These were the brigantines Cuba and Machias, both of Maine. The captures were taken in tow and carried off in the direction of Cienfuegos. The next day, however, the Cuba broke adrift from her hawser, and on being recovered, a prize crew was sent on board the vessel, with directions to carry her into Cienfuegos, for which port Captain Semmes was now shaping his course.



Arrived off that harbour on the evening of the same day, it was found too late to attempt to enter, and two more vessels being descried in the offing, the Machias was cast off, with orders to lay-to until the morning, and the Sumter started off in chase. On coming up with the two vessels, at about half-past nine o'clock, they proved to be the United States brigantines, Ben Dunning and Albert Adams. They were at once taken possession of, and ordered to make the best of their way in charge of a prize crew to Cienfuegos.

The night was passed in standing off and on outside the harbour, and with the earliest dawn preparations were made for running in. The weather was bright and clear, and the brief twilight of the tropics flushed rapidly into the full glare of day, and showed to the watchful eyes on board the Sumter the welcome spectacle of three more vessels being towed out to sea by a steamer, the stars and stripes floating gaily from their peaks. Warily and patiently the little Sumter lay in wait, under the shelter of the land, until the steamer had cast off her convoy, and the three unsuspecting vessels were fairly beyond the maritime league from the neutral shore, within which the law of nations forbids that captures should be made. Then suddenly her decks swarmed with men, the black smoke poured from her funnel, the sails filled, and out she came in pursuit. The chase was brief, and ere long the barque West Wind, the brigantine Naiad, and the barque Louisa Kilham were in charge of prize crews, and wending their way sadly back to the port they had so recently left in full expectation of a prosperous voyage.

So, with her little fleet of prizes, six in all, before her, the Sumter steered proudly into the harbour of Cienfuegos. As

she passed the fort which guards the entrance, a hail was heard from the shore, accompanied by the almost simultaneous report of a couple of musket shots fired over the vessel, for the purpose, apparently, of enforcing the order to bring up and come to an anchor. The command having been obeyed, a boat was at once despatched in charge of Lieutenant Evans to call on the Commandant and ask an explanation of this inhospitable reception. The message was brought back, that the flag of the new Confederacy had not been understood by him, and that the vessel had consequently been brought up in compliance with the standing order that no vessel, whether of war or otherwise, should be permitted to pass until her nationality had been ascertained. Explanations, of course, followed, and in the evening came the Commandant, with the Governor's permission either to land or go to sea, but accompanied by an intimation that the six prizes would be detained until instructions could be received from headquarters concerning them.

Lieutenant Chapman was now sent on shore with the following despatch for the Governor, and also to make arrangements for coaling and for the safety and ultimate disposition of the prizes:

C.S. Sumter. Cienfuegos, Island of Cuba,  
July 6th, 1861.

Sir,—I have the honour to inform your Excellency of my arrival at the Port of Cienfuegos with seven prizes of war. These vessels are the brigantines Cuba, Machias, Ben Dunning, Albert Adams and Naiad; and barques West Wind and Louisa Kilham, property of citizens of the United States,

which States, as your Excellency is aware, are waging an unjust and aggressive war upon the Confederate States, which I have the honour, with this ship under my command, to represent. I have sought a port of Cuba with these prizes, with the expectation that Spain will extend to cruisers of the Confederate States the same friendly reception that in similar circumstances she would extend to the cruisers of the enemy; in other words, that she will permit me to leave the captured vessels within her jurisdiction until they can be adjudicated by a Court of Admiralty of the Confederate States. As a people maintaining a Government *de facto*, and not only holding the enemy in check, but gaining advantages over him, we are entitled to all the rights of belligerents, and I confidently rely upon the friendly disposition of Spain, who is our near neighbour in the most important of her colonial possessions, to receive us with equal and even-handed justice, if not with the sympathy which our unity of interest and policy, with regard to an important social and industrial institution, are so well calculated to inspire. A rule which would exclude our prizes from her ports during the war, although it should be applied in terms equally to the enemy, would not, I respectfully suggest, be an equitable or just rule. The basis of such a rule, as, indeed, of all the conduct of a neutral during war, is equal and impartial justice to all the belligerents; and this should be a substantial and practical justice, and not exist in delusive or deceptive terms merely. Now, a little reflection will, I think, show your Excellency that the rule in question cannot be applied in the present war without operating with great injustice to the Confederate States. It is well known to

your Excellency that the United States being a manufacturing and commercial people, whilst the Confederate States have been thus far almost wholly an agricultural and planting people, the former had within their limits and control almost the whole naval force of the old Government, and that they have seized and appropriated this force to themselves, regardless of the just claims of the Confederate States to a portion, and a large portion of it, as tax-payers out of whose contributions it was created. The United States are thus enabled to blockade all the important ports of the Confederate States. In this condition of things, observe the practical working of the rule which I am discussing.

It must be admitted that we have equal belligerent rights with the enemy.

One of the most important of these rights in a war against a commercial people, is that which I have just exercised, of capturing his property upon the high seas. But how are the Confederate States to enjoy to its full extent the benefit of this right, if their cruisers are not permitted to enter neutral ports with their prizes, and retain them there in safe custody until they can be condemned and disposed of?

They cannot send them to their own ports for the reasons already stated. Except for the purpose of destruction, therefore, their right of capture would be entirely defeated by the adoption of the rule in question, whilst the enemy would suffer no inconvenience from it, as all his ports are open to him. I take it for granted that Spain will not think of acting upon so unjust and unequal a rule.

But another question arises, indeed has already arisen, in the cases of some of the very captures which I have brought into port. The cargoes of several of the vessels are claimed, as appears by certificates found among the papers, as Spanish property.

This fact cannot of course be verified, except by a judicial proceeding in the Prize Courts of the Confederate States.

But whilst this fact is being determined, what is to be done with the property? I have the right to destroy the vessels, but not the cargoes, in case the latter should prove to be, as claimed, Spanish property—but how am I to destroy the former, and not the latter? I cannot before sentence unlade the cargoes and deliver them to the claimants, for I do not know that the claims will be sustained; and I cannot destroy them, for I do not know that the claims will not be sustained.

Indeed, one of the motives which influenced me in seeking a Spanish port, was the fact that these cargoes were claimed by Spanish subjects, whom I was desirous of putting to as little inconvenience as possible in the unloading and reception of their property, after sentence, should it be restored to them.

It will be for your Excellency to consider and act upon these grave questions, touching alike the interests of both our Governments.

I have the honour to be, &c., &c.,

**R. SEMMES.**

His Excellency Don Jose de la Pozuela,  
Governor of the City of Cienfuegos, Island of Cuba.

At eight o'clock on the morning of the 7th July, Lieutenant Chapman returned, bringing with him Don Isnaga and Don Mariano Dias, two Cuban gentlemen, warm sympathizers with the Confederate cause. The latter of these gentlemen was at once appointed prize agent, and after partaking of the hospitality of the ship, they returned to shore, and the remainder of the day was spent on board the Sumter in replenishing the various stores that had begun to run low after her cruise. In the course of the day about 100 tons of coal and 5000 gallons of water were shipped, besides a quantity of fresh provisions for the crew; and at about 10 P.M. an answer arrived from the Governor to the despatch sent on shore the previous evening by Lieutenant Chapman.

It stated that the Captain-General of Cuba had given instructions as follows:—

1. No cruiser of either party can bring their prizes into Spanish ports.
2. If in any captures the territory of Cuba has been violated, the Spanish courts will themselves judge of the matter.
3. Any prizes will be detained until instructions can be had from the Queen.

These points being ascertained, the prizes already at anchor were left to the care of the prize agent, Don Dias, and at about midnight the Sumter hove up her anchor and again proceeded to sea. Nothing had as yet been seen of the prize brig Cuba, which had been left in charge of a prize crew a day or two before, nor, indeed, did she ever arrive at