

(continued from previous page) and with those manners which any man, if he has traveled much, has often seen. She gave herself out as a daughter of an English baronet, and had first come to New York several years prior to the war. Then there was Belle Boyd, who represented herself we believe, as an agent sent out by Mr. Benjamin. She was captured, with our friend George Baer, on the *Greyhound*. Another was a Mrs. Baxley, of Baltimore. She represented herself, we believe, as an agent of old Mr. Memminger—that compeer of Gallatin and Neckar—who, by-the-way, ever since the surrender has been hiding away somewhere up in the mountain fastnesses of South Carolina, in mortal terror; and who, whenever he hears of even a bureau agent in the shape of a chaplain being in the neighborhood, immediately hies himself off to his retreat, not to reappear till the representative of the United States has departed the vicinity. The fact is, the United States ought to send old Mr. Memminger a free pardon and grant him a pension. He did about as much as any other man we know of to break down the Confederacy. Mallory should be taken care of for life. And as for Benjamin, the United States never can repay the debt of gratitude it owes him for having, by his unfortunate counsels, assisted it in the destruction of “the rebellion.” They should send a public ship to bring Benjamin back to his sorrowing country, which so deeply mourns his loss.

Mr. Mallory’s navy was always the laughing-stock of the army, and many were the jeers that the Confederate “mud-crushers” let off at his ironclads, formidable things as they were, had he managed properly the Confederate navy. Captain Lynch was the flag-officer of the Cape Fear squadron when we first went there. His fleet consisted of the iron-clad ram *North Carolina*, which drew so much water that she could never get over the bars of the Cape Fear River Inlet—except, possibly, at the highest spring-tide, and then the chances were against her ever getting back again; the *Raleigh*, another iron-clad, not completed till late in the summer of ‘64; and two or three little steam-tugs. They all came to grief. The *North Carolina*, the bottom of which was neither sheathed nor prepared to resist the worms, was pierced by them till her hull was like a honey-comb, and finally was sunk opposite Smithville. The *Raleigh*, after going out and scaring off the blockading fleet at the New Inlet, was beached and lost on a bar near Fort Fisher in returning. The tugs were burned on the river subsequent to the evacuation of the town.

Whiting and Lynch from some cause or other never were on good terms, jealous of each other’s authority, we suppose. It finally came near culminating seriously. There had been an order sent by Mr. Mallory to Lynch, in pursuance of an act of the Confederate Congress, not to let any vessel go out without taking out a certain proportion of Government cotton. Lynch was commander of the naval defenses of the Cape Fear. By some oversight the Adjutant-General’s office at Richmond had sent no such order to Whiting, who commanded the Department, and consequently the port and its regulations. One of Collie’s steamers was about to go out without complying with the law. Old Lynch sent a half company of marines on board of her and took possession. This Whiting resented rather haughtily as an unwarrantable interference with his authority as Commander of the port, and marching in a battalion of the Seventeenth North Carolina Regiment, under Lieutenant-Colonel John C. Lamb, ejected the marines, and took possession of the steamer and hauled her up stream to her wharf. Lynch said he did not care how far Whiting took her up the river, but he vowed if any attempt was made to take her to sea he would sink her, and he shotted his guns. Matters looked squally and excitement was high. A collision was feared. They were both summoned to Richmond to explain, and both returned apparently satisfied. Lynch, however, was shortly afterward relieved, and Commodore Pinckney took his place.

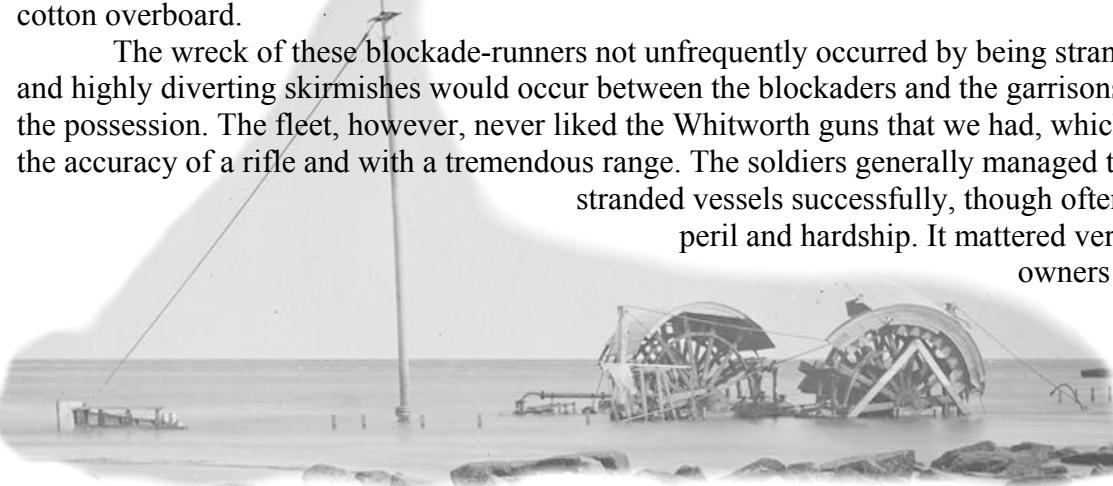
We had often wondered why the port was not more effectually closed. To tell the truth it was hardly closed at all. Many of the blockade-runners continued their career till the fall of Fisher. An experienced captain and good engineer invariably brought a ship safe by the blockading squadron. Wilkinson and Carter never failed—good sailors, cool, cautious, and resolute they ran in and out without

difficulty many times. The great danger was from the exterior line of the blockaders some forty or fifty miles out.

But owing to the configuration of the coast it is almost impossible to effect a close blockade. The Cape Fear has two mouths, the Old Inlet, at the entrance of which Fort Caswell stands, and the New Inlet, nine miles up the river, where Fisher guards the entrance. From the station off the Old Inlet, where there were usually from five to six blockaders, around to the station off the New Inlet, a vessel would have to make an arc of some fifty miles, owing to the Frying Pan Shoals intervening, while from Caswell across to Fisher it was only nine miles. The plan of the blockade-runners coming in was to strike the coast thirty or forty miles above or below the Inlets, and then run along (of course at night) till they got under the protection of the forts. Sometimes they got in or out by boldly running through the blockading fleet, but that was hazardous, for if discovered, the ocean was alive with rockets and lights, and it was no pleasant thing to have shells and balls whistling over you and around you. The chances were, then, that if you were not caught, you had, in spite of your speed, to throw a good many bales of cotton overboard.

The wreck of these blockade-runners not unfrequently occurred by being stranded or beached, and highly diverting skirmishes would occur between the blockaders and the garrisons of the forts for the possession. The fleet, however, never liked the Whitworth guns that we had, which shot almost with the accuracy of a rifle and with a tremendous range. The soldiers generally managed to wreck the

stranded vessels successfully, though oftentimes with great
peril and hardship. It mattered very little to the
owners then who got her,
as they did not see
much of what
was recovered—
the soldiers
thinking they
were entitled to



what they got at the risk of their lives. But a wreck was a most demoralizing affair—the whole garrison generally got drunk and staid drunk for a week or so afterward. Brandy and fine wines flowed like water; and it was a month perhaps before matters could be got straight. Many accumulated snug little sums from the misfortunes of the blockade-runners, who generally denounced such pillage as piracy; but it could not be helped.

We recollect the wrecking of the *Ella* off Baldhead in December, '64. She belonged to the Bee Company of Charleston, and was a splendid new steamer, on her second trip in, with a large and valuable cargo almost entirely owned by private parties and speculators. She was chased ashore by the blockading fleet, and immediately abandoned by her officers and crew, whom nothing would induce to go back in order to save her cargo. Yankee shells flying over, and through, and around her had no charms for these sons of Neptune. Captain Badham, however, and his company, the Edenton (N. C.) Battery, with Captain Bahnsen, a fighting Quaker from Salem, N. C., boarded and wrecked her under the fire of the Federals —six shells passing through the *Ella* while they were removing her cargo. The consequence was that for a month afterward nearly the whole garrison were on "a tight," and groceries and dry-goods were plentiful in that vicinity. The general demoralization produced by "London Dock" and "Hollands" seemed even to have affected that holy man, the Chaplain, who said some very queer graces at the head-quarter's mess-table.

Seldom, however, was there any loss of life attending these wrecks. But there was one notable case of the drowning of a famous woman, celebrated for her beauty and powers of fascination. We allude to the death of Mrs. Greenhow, so well known for many years in Washington circles. Before she even crossed the Confederate lines she had undoubtedly rendered valuable service to the authorities at Richmond, and was in consequence imprisoned by the Federal authorities in Washington. After coming to Richmond and laboring in the hospitals there for some time she sailed for Europe from Wilmington, and it was on her return trip that she was drowned, just as she reached the shores of the South. She had lived past her beauty's prime, had drank deep of fashion and folly's stream of pleasure, had received the admiration and adulation of hundreds of her fellow-mortals, and had reached that point in life when those things no longer please but pall on the senses. Her time had come. The small boat in which she was coming from the vessel, which was beached just a short distance above Fisher, upset. Mrs. Greenhow, after sinking several times, was brought to shore, but soon after reaching it died. It was said that the gold she had sewed up and concealed about her person had borne her down and was the cause of her death; that had it not been for that weight she would have been saved. Her body was brought to Wilmington and laid out in the Sailors' Church, where we saw her. She was beautiful in death. After her funeral her wardrobe and a great many articles that she had brought over for sale, and which had been rescued from the wreck, were sold at auction in Wilmington. It was very splendid, and the "venture" she had brought in for sale was most costly. It was said that an English countess or duchess had an interest in this venture, and was to have shared the profits of the speculation.

But the storm was soon to rain on our devoted heads. Those white-painted steamers, clipping the water so nimbly, with the British and Confederate flags flying, with their brandies and wines, their silks and calicoes, their bananas and oranges, and gladdening the hearts of the dwellers on the bank of the Cape Fear, were soon to disappear from its waters, and the glory of Wilmington to depart.

Day after day we had watched the blockading fleet with the naked eye and a glass, and often thought what a lonely time those fellows must be having, and longed for some northeast storm to send them on the coast, in order that we might have the pleasure of their acquaintance. Cushing's, by-the-way, we came very near making, when that daring officer came up the Cape Fear in June, we think it was, '64, passing through the New Inlet by Fort Fisher with a boat's crew of some eighteen or twenty sailors and marines, and, landing half-way between the town and the fort, concealed his boat in a creek, and laid *perdu* on the Wilmington and Fisher road, waiting for Whiting or Lamb to come along. A mere accident enabled us to escape him; and though of no importance ourselves, we had papers with us at the time that would have been highly interesting to the United States Government. We all of us admired his courage, and thought it deserved success. We well remember delivering Cushing's message (repeated to us by the old citizen whom he caught and released) to General Whiting, that "he had been in Wilmington, and would have him or Colonel Lamb shortly."

On December 24, '64, the armada commanded by Butler and Porter appeared off the coast. That day the United States forces under Butler landed, and the bombardment of Fisher commenced, and such a *fue d'enfer* as was poured on that devoted fort was never seen. Coming up the river from Smithville on a steamer that afternoon we witnessed it, and such a roar of artillery we never heard. Those large double-enders seemed to stand in remarkably close to the fort, and deliver their fire with great accuracy, knocking up the sand on the ramparts. It seemed a continuous hail of shot and shell, many of them going over Fisher and dropping in the river. But Fisher was a long sand fort, stretching in an obtuse angle from the river bank around to the mouth of the New Inlet, that opened into the ocean. It was over a mile from point to point. Though it was thus heavily bombarded for two days, little or no impression was made on its works except to give them a ragged appearance, and very few casualties occurred, the garrison

sticking mostly to their bomb-proofs, which were very complete. Whiting was there in command in person, having been sent there by Bragg, of which latter personage presently.

On Saturday night, Christmas-eve, Butler's powder-ship was exploded. It appears to have made no impression on the fort or the garrison, but we must confess those 300 tons of powder going off made us, though twenty miles off, feel very weak in the knees, and shook our nerves considerably, for we did not know what it was at first, nor what had occurred. About 2 A.M. we were quietly asleep in our quarters with our wife and little one by our side, when this terrible explosion occurred. It must have been heard with greater effect in Wilmington than at the fort, possibly from the fact that the wind was setting in that direction, though the town was twenty miles off. There came in the dead of night that awful noise; the earth seemed to heave, the house shook violently, as if the walls were going to fall out and the roof coming down on us. The baby slept quietly on in its cradle; our better-half clung to us, and hysterically insisted that we should say the Lord's Prayer. Though very familiar with it and the rest of the Bible, to save our lives we could not recollect it. Butler's powder-ship had completely knocked all of our memory out of us. We do not believe we could at that moment have told our own name, so completely had the terrific noise upset us.



Fort Fisher

The next day, Christmas, was Sunday, and all day Porter's guns were thundering away at Fisher and shaking the windows in Wilmington, where the citizens were offering up their prayers for our protection from the enemy. Communication with Fort Fisher by land or telegraph was then cut off—the messages had been sent up to that time. Toward night sensational messages commenced to be brought up from below—one to the effect that the enemy were on the parapet at Fisher (in truth and in fact they never got closer than the stables, at least two or three hundred yards from the fort). Bragg sent Mrs. Bragg away that night at 9 P.M., in a special train, up the Weldon Road, and an officer who saw him at about 11 P.M.. reported that the old gentleman seemed to be quite unnerved, and that his hand was very tremulous. Of course there was a great exodus of civilians from the place the next morning early, the

fact that Mrs. Bragg had gone off acting as a key-note of alarm to others. By mid-day, however, Monday these sensational reports and stories were all quieted by the authenticated news that the enemy had re-embarked on the fleet, and that the attack had ceased. Then the fleet sailed, and every thing quieted down. The general impression was that there would not be another attack till after the spring equinox, in May, say, or the June following.



Capture of Fort Fisher

When Whiting returned to the city Bragg still continued in command, and his friends and himself evidently took the credit of having foiled Butler's attempt. Bragg was a friend and favorite of Mr. Davis. He had sided with General Taylor in Taylor's quarrel with General Scott, and Mr. Davis was a man who never forgot his friends nor forgave his enemies. He seemed determined to sustain Bragg at all events, though the feeling throughout the whole army, and in fact the South, was against that General. When Wilmington was known to be threatened, and Bragg was sent there, the Richmond *Examiner* simply remarked, "Good-by, Wilmington!" and the prediction was verified.

Whiting, after the first attack, wrote to Bragg, advising that in case of another attack, which would probably be made, to prevent surprise he would advise that Hagood's South Carolina brigade, numbering over 2000 effective men, be thrown into Fort Fisher, the garrison of which consisted of one raw, inexperienced regiment that had never smelled powder except in the first attack, and which did not number even over 700 effective men. Hagood's troops were veterans, and had been in many a battle. He also advised that the three other brigades of Hoke's division be placed along about the spot where the Federals had first landed, and be intrenched so as to prevent a landing above the fort. Wise precautions if they had been adopted. Bragg indorsed on the letter of advice from Whiting that he saw no necessity in carrying out those suggestions. It was the failure to carry out those suggestions that lost Wilmington.

Had they been followed Wilmington would not have fallen when it did, nor Fisher have been taken. Instead, Bragg brought Hoke's division up about a half mile back of Wilmington, over twenty miles from the fort, and had a grand review there, in which he paraded himself in a new suit of uniform presented to him by his admirers in Wilmington.

Whiting's prediction about a surprise was shortly to be verified. Thursday night, the 10th of January, '65, the fleet again appeared off Fisher, this time through Bragg's imbecility, to do its work effectually, and Friday morning the citizens of Wilmington were aroused by the booming of Porter's cannon a second time opening on Fisher. When the news came up at midnight that the fleet had again appeared, the band of Hoke's division were in town serenading, the officers were visiting, and the men scattered about—Bragg no doubt asleep in fancied security.

Of the capture of Fort Fisher, and the subsequent inevitable loss of Wilmington, I shall not speak. These events have passed into history. My purpose has been simply to portray the aspect of Wilmington when blockaded.

Johns, John, "Wilmington During the Blockade," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, Volume 33, Issue 196, September, 1866, pp. 497-503, New York: Harper & Bros.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

We've anticipated a few questions that might be asked about Skedaddle and will try to answer them here.

What is Skedaddle?

Skedaddle is a free e-zine primarily consisting of material written over 100 years ago about the American civil war, often by people who experienced the war or who were directly impacted by it. Material related to the conditions and circumstances that led to the war may also be included. Skedaddle may be printed and distributed in hard-copy, including unlimited copies, for non-profit, non-commercial purposes. Skedaddle may not be re-published electronically or on-line without permission.

What kind of material will be included in Skedaddle?

For the most part, the content of Skedaddle will be short pieces that fit well within the journal's format. The pieces will include incidents, anecdotes, poetry, as well as other material that may become available. In some instances, the material may be an excerpt from a larger work. Occasionally a piece will be edited for space considerations.

Where does the material for Skedaddle come from?

The public domain. During and after the civil war, there was a significant number of works published that included material related to the war, and, of course, in many instances the entire works were devoted to the topic. Nineteenth century material included in Skedaddle is from the public domain and thus free of copyright. However, once material is included and published in Skedaddle, it becomes a part of a compilation, which is protected under U. S. and international copyright laws. If material for an article is edited to fit in the available space, it becomes a new work protected under copyright laws.

Is Skedaddle pro-North or pro-South?

Neither. However, the material published in Skedaddle, in many instances, will be slanted one way or another as a result of the nineteenth century author's or subject's views and experiences. While the editor will try to maintain a balance between the two sides, there is simply a lot more material available from the side of the victors.

Will Skedaddle be “politically correct?”

Not intentionally. Articles, stories, and poems in our e-journal originated over 100 years ago. The views expressed and the language used will, in most instances, be included as published in the original text. When pieces are edited for space considerations, the text will not be intentionally altered to conform with twenty-first century sensitivities.

Does Skedaddle have an “agenda?”

The only agenda that Skedaddle has is to show the war from the perspectives of 19th century writers.

About Skedaddle

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