

XCII.

IN WHICH OUR ENTHUSIASTIC CORRESPONDENT SURPASSES ÆSCHYLUS  
IN THE WAY OF AN INVOCATION: AND DESCRIBES REAR ADMIRAL  
HEAD'S GREAT NAVAL DEMONSTRATION AGAINST FORT PIANO.

WASHINGTON, D. C., April 20th, 1863.

STAND aside, my boy, and realize your own civilian insignificance, while I invoke all the gods of Old Olympus to aid me with their inspiration, in the tale of naval grandeur it is my duty to unfold.

Fired with the soul to hail my country great, and write her honors endless to the world, full to the sun I wave the eager pen, invoking all the lightning of the gods. Descend on me, Olympian dews, descend! that this tired brain, where oft the new-born thought hath died unblossomed in the fainting soil, may catch fresh vigor from the grateful balm, and teem thrice glorious in a nobler youth. By all the fire that glows in Homer's song, to make all ages flame anew with Troy; by all the music stirred in Virgil's lay, to make Æneas ever march the world; by all the heav'nly fury of the theme, Æschylus-taken, picturing gods to men; by all the Art o'er nature raised sublime, and unto Xenophon revealed by night, to make Ten Thousand nobler in Retreat than thrice ten thousand by a Cæsar led; by All that unto All hath been their All, I charge thee, oh, thou impulse of the gods! grand as the storm and chainless as the wind, descend on me! as

(128)

lightning from the cloud descends to beacon what the storm makes dark. That I may write, in words of thunder born, such deeds as strengthen while they shake the world; that I may write, in lines to trumpets tuned, such acts as make men brothers to the gods; that I may write, in notes to mock the lute, such feats of cunning as lull Fate to sleep; that I may dip th' immortalizing pen in bright Pactolus' ever golden stream, and write, in language sweeter to the ear than Hymet's honey to soft Dion's lips, glories of arms to first make Nature crouch — then leap to something higher than herself!

(If any man objects to that sort of thing, my boy, may he be whipped to death by the aged maidens of the Confederacy, and utterly perish *per flagellationem extremam*.)

And now I feel the Homeric inspiration in all my veins as I dip the impatient quill into the Black Republican ink, and hasten to record the deathless honors recently reaped by the Mackerel Iron-plated Squadron in a deathless attack upon Fort Piano.

You may remember, my boy, that the construction of a pier on Duck Lake by some shameless Confederacies, and the erection on the end thereof of Fort Piano, was first made known to our noble old sea-dog, Rear Admiral Head, whilst he sat on the quarter deck of his original iron-plated squadron fishing for bass, by the accidental knocking of the squadron against the end of the pier. His back being turned at the time, he had not noticed the building of the terrible fortification; and when the horrible jar of the collision caused him to look that way, he found six villanous horse-pistols so planted by the disrespectful Confederacies as to exactly command his fish-

basket and box of bait. You may also remember my boy, how our glorious old Neptune subsequently caused the stanch "Secretary Welles" to run the blockade of the fort, to thoroughly test the invulnerability of the iron-clad principle; and how the result of that test satisfactorily proved the iron-clad principle to be entirely testaceous.

Since then, you have heard about the building of the new Mackerel iron-plated squadron, the "Shockingbadhat," with Rear Admiral Head's newly improved turret and reversed swivel-gun; but you have not yet heard, my boy, anything at all about the unique manufacture of six additional iron-plated squadrons, to participate with the "Shockingbadhat" in the recent severe attack on Fort Piano. You have not heard of these six new monsters before, my boy, and respect for the really decent families of the inventors forbids that I should tell you anything descriptive about them now, save their names.

It was intended that the name of the first should be something full of significance to perfidious England, and, at the same time, something never used in England. Hence, she was christened the "Aitch."

The second was to bear a name signifying the power of bending without breaking; and so she was called after that elastic tree, the "Yew."

In the name of the third, the Government wished to pay a complimentary tribute to Rear Admiral Head; and, in honor of his daughter, Emma, the squadron was named the "Em."

The fourth iron-plated invulnerable Mackerel monster it was deemed proper to decorate with a name expressive of industry coupled with a power to sting; and so she was called the "Bee."

There was some discussion about the proper title for the fifth patent iron-clad, each member of the generous Mackerel Naval Committee saying to the other: "Why can't she be named after you?" So, it was at length decided to happily compromise the matter by calling her the "You."

By common consent the sixth invincible iron monster was adjudged to be known by the first of General George B. McClellan's initials, and was entitled the "Gee."

Add these new national champions of the deep, my boy, to the "Shockingbadhat," and you will have some idea of the glorious naval pageant prepared to administer wholesome correction to the irreverent Confederacies of Fort Piano, and teach the world that worn-out cooking-stoves can be sold to the sagacious Government of the United States of America for something better than old iron.

The "Shockingbadhat" was the flag-ship; and, on the morning of the attack, the hoary Rear Admiral Head repaired to the top of her turret with his umbrella, fishing-rod, and pocket-microscope, taking with him the Mackerel crew to work the improved swivel-gun, which was also up there; and giving orders to another unconquerable Mackerel to locate himself amidships with a quart measure, for the purpose of measuring the number of bushels of shots striking the turret during the first two seconds of the approaching sea-fight.

Ranged along the right shore of Duck Lake, my boy, to witness the battle and lend lustre to the landscape, was a land-force of virtuous Mackerels, under command of the venerable grandmother of Rear Admiral Head; and she was the one whose appearance gave rise to that rumor

amongst the Confederacies in the Fort, that Secretary Welles was reviewing the troops in person.

On the opposite shore of the Lake was a delegation of European chaps, come to behold the engagement; including Fatti O'Murphy, candidate for the vacant throne of Greece; the Hon. Mr. New Trollope, of England; and le Marquis Non Puebla, French Minister to Mexico.

At the head of the Lake, my boy, I stood myself, with my bit of smoked glass in my hand; and around me were the reporters of all the reliable and excellent morning journals, spitting on their hands, preparatory to writing their exciting descriptions of personal danger.

Precisely at noon the Mackerels of the land force raised their umbrellas, the Mackerel crews got aboard their respective squadrons, and exercises were commenced by the singing of—

“My country, 'tis of thee.”

As the last strain died away, we could hear that grim old sea-dog, Rear Admiral Head, swearing in his iron-plated manner, and then the whole naval pageant swept magnificently to the front of Fort Piano; the “Shockingbadhat” leading, closely followed by the “Aitch,” the “Yew,” the “Em,” the “Bee,” the “You,” and the “Gee.” It was a glorious sight, my boy, — a glorious sight, and moved me like the First of May.

For the purpose of testing the range and drawing the fire of the unseemly Confederacies' Artillery, Rear Admiral Head carefully let down his old white hat into the waves, and suffered it to drift slowly past the north-east face of Fort Piano. We held our breath as we saw the

artful decoy whirl for a moment in an eddy caused by a land-crab, and then drift against the pier, where it stuck. Immediately a hand was seen reaching down after it, the hat was drawn up, and a prodigious horse-laugh arose from the uncomely Confederacies in the Fort. They supposed the hat to be Mr. Greely's.

“Sink my Keokuk!” roared Rear Admiral Head, in his iron-plated manner, — “I really believe the treasonable insects have been and stolen my beaver, — obstruct my Ironsides, if I don't!”

Scarcely had the words passed his lips, my boy, when a Confederacy *en barbette* discharged a double-barrelled fowling-piece at the “Aitch” knocking off two of her front covers, breaking several bars of her grates, and piercing her oven in numerous places. Instantly the cry arose of “One of the cooking-stoves is sinking!” which so bewildered Rear-Admiral Head that he discharged his swivel-gun one point too far to the windward, and immediately found his flagship entangled on several strings with which the Confederacies had obstructed the passage.

“Disable my Patapsco!” exclaimed the indomitable old Neptune, in his iron-plated manner, “the insects have tied us fast, — bend my turrets if they haven't.”

At this time, my boy, the concentrated fire of the Fort was terrific, six horse-pistols being in full play at once, and the Mackerel with the quart measure amidships reporting that the turret of the “Shockingbadhat” had been hit three quarts of times in thirty seconds.

Such being the case, and the European delegation having gone home with a view to shaking off their inclination to fall asleep, the stern old commander ordered a wet blan-

ket to be thrown over his swivel-gun, and such of the iron-plated squadron as had not sunk were immediately run ashore. The affair had been merely a reconnoissance.

Shortly after the conclusion of this terrible artillery duel, and a few minutes subsequent to a touching exchange of congratulations between the unconquerable Rear-Admiral and his venerable grandmother, there hastily arrived from Paris an obese middle-aged chap, in black cotton gloves and a scratch wig, and says he to the Admiral:

"Allow me to bless you, Sir, — My name is Hunter, Sir, — for your excellent iron-clad conduct. We should all be grateful, sir, that you have passed safely through 'a concentric fire that has never heretofore had a parallel in the history of warfare.'"

Never heretofore had a parallel! What could he have meant, my boy? How could a *concentric* fire have a *parallel* at any time?

Yours, questioningly,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.

### LETTER XCIII.

TEEMING WITH CONSUMMATE STRATEGY, AND RELATING AN EXTRAORDINARY GEOMETRICAL EFFORT OF MILITARY GENIUS.

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 10th, 1863.

As it was feared on Sunday last, my boy, that the venerable Mackerel Brigade was about to commit a breach of the peace by strategically assaulting the Confederacies established in the mud between the Mackerel camp and the ancient City of Paris, I mounted my architectural steed, the Gothic Pegasus, at an early hour in the morning, and perceptibly moved toward the scene of approaching tautology. The emaciated aspect of my architectural steed of the desert was so inviting to the fowls of the air, my boy, that divers disreputable crows circled suddenly around my hat, as my animal progressed with me by miscellaneously scattering his legs around beneath himself, and at each particular "caw" of the winged ministers of famine, a perceptible shudder passed through the entire framework of the deeply agitated Pegasus. Abstractedly waving my umbrella, to inspire the sable birds for loftier flights, I pondered deeply upon the lesson taught me by the evident emotions of my aged architectural servant; to ride upon whose fluted back may be likened to sitting astride the peaked roof of a small country chapel in the midst of a hard earthquake, and holding