

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

on by the steeple. If this Gothic creation, which is but a horse, thought I, is so agonized by the mere breakfast notes of a few demoralized crows in the atmosphere, how much more terrible must be the anguish of the fellow-beings known as Southern Confederacies, who must ever have a dreadful presentiment of being summarily expunged from the human race by any one of our brass-buttoned generals, who happens to board in their neighborhood for a few years. If I pity this architectural servant of mine, thought I, for his anguish at the proximity of crows in the abstract, how much more tender should be my feeling for Southern fellow-beings, who are continually endangered by the much louder crows emanating from adjacent hostile Major-General roosters. As I pondered thus, my boy, a crow of much plumage and large-sized mien, suddenly alighted upon the pommel of my saddle, as though impatient to breakfast upon some pounds of horseflesh. For an instant Pegasus trembled throughout his works; he paused suddenly in his peregrination, laid back his ears as though in deep thought, twisted his head suddenly about, and bit off the tail of the crow in the abstract!

Simple as was the act, it at once relieved me, in my own mind, of all obligations to have a more tender feeling for my Southern fellow-beings than is consistent with a proper emotion of hatred against the enemies of my country. After all, we can learn much more from brutes than from men; and as Balaam's ass saw the angel before his master did, so the Angel of Victory is likely to be distinctly obvious to any poor ass in the country, before he becomes visible to the sight of our strategic great men.

(I turn a pretty sharp corner in that last sentence, my boy; but that is only safe strategy when you find your argument getting ahead of you.)

It was high noon when I reached the Mackerel camp, and I found the spectacled veterans hastily preparing to cross Duck Lake after the manner of aquatic warriors. By some strange fatality, all the pontoons were at hand in time, greatly to the distress of our more venerable troops, who seemed to fear that such unheard-of punctuality must be an evil omen. As there were a great many pontoons, and it was not deemed best to waste any of them, two bridges were built instead of one, — it being considered that, inasmuch as it was purposed to surprise the unseemly Confederacies on the other side, two bridges would be just twice as surprising to them as one would be. There was logic in this idea, my boy — much logic and consummate strategy.

Gazing across the expanse of waters, I beheld a couple of regiments of Confederacies playing poker on the bank, and says I to Villiam Brown, who was at that moment returning a small black bottle to his holster:

“Tell me, my fearless blue-back, how this can possibly be a surprise, when yonder gray-backs are looking on all the time?”

“Ah!” says Villiam, with much loftiness of demeanor; “you are but an ignorant civilian in-seck, and know nothing about war. The movement,” says Villiam, placidly, “is intended as a surprise to the enemy, upon the principle that any movement whatever of this Army must surprise everybody.”

I was reflecting seriously upon this unanswerable ex-

planation of profound strategy, my boy, when Captain Bob Shorty came rattling up with a paper in his hand, and says he: "Attention, Company! while I read a document calculated to restrain the licentiousness of a corrupt and vicious press:

"GENERAL ORDER.

"For the purpose of preventing the transmission of all news not previously published in the morning journals of the so-called Southern Confederacy, it has been determined by the General Commanding to require all correspondents of the press to affix their full names, ages, and addresses to whatever matter they transmit for publication, thus giving to the journals of our time the double character of newspaper and business-directory. Reporters having vulgar names, like Jones, Smith, or Stiggins, will be at liberty to assume the names borne by the most popular characters in the exciting tales furnished by our weekly journals of romance, — such as Lord Mortimer, Claude de Percy, Lester Heartsease.

"Correspondents who do not comply with this requirement will not be permitted to assist in surprising the so-called Southern Confederacy.

"THE GENERAL OF THE MACKEREL BRIGADE."

(Blue Seal.)

After we had all duly digested this useful and sagacious General Order, my boy, Captain Samyule Samith was ordered to make a detour of Duck Lake with the Anatomical Cavalry, and dig a canal in the rear of the well-known Confederacy; and the Mackerel Brigade, under

the personal supervision of the Grim Old Fighting Cox, commenced to cross the pontoon-bridges in two divisions. The bridge that I was upon, my boy, was at once attacked at the other end by a surprised Confederacy with a large pair of scissors, who malignantly cut that end loose. There was an aged civilian chap, from Albany, of much stomach and a broad-brimmed hat, standing near me; and when he found the bridge beginning to move, he smote his breast, and says he:

"Where are we drifting to?"

"Be not alarmed, Mr. Weed," says I, pleasantly; "we shall soon repair the damage."

"Hem!" says he, "I wish I'd gone over on the other platform at first."

He was quite an old man, my boy, slowly sinking into the rising waves of his own fat; and for that reason appeared to have a chronic fear of some unexpected submersion.

The Mackerel Brigade, in two parts, having reached the opposite shore of Duck Lake in safety, the Grim Old Fighting Cox ordered Captain Villiam Brown and Captain Bob Shorty to take each a regiment of spectacled veterans and cautiously feel the Confederacies' lines, while he led the remainder of the national troops to a small village at hand, which had particularly requested to be immediately destroyed. It was his great strategical plan, my boy, to form his lines in the shape of a triangle, thus inclosing the unmannerly Confederacies between three fires, and winning a great geometrical victory. The Confederacies being duly surrounded, and the village being set on fire at the apex of the triangle, the Grim Old

Fighting Cox withdrew to a tent, spread a map of the world upon a camp-stool before him, and proceeded to take topographical observations. Drawing from his saddle-bags an instrument of opaque glass, of tubular character, quite large in circumference about half-way up, and then tapering into a neck, or smaller tube, of nearly the same length, he raised it in a semi-horizontal position to a point about one and a half inches above the lower circumference of his chin, until he could look through it at an angle bisecting its greater circumference upon the map below. The light, striking through the body of this instrument, cast a wavy, fluctuating sort of yellowish glare upon that part of the map representing the well-known Southern Confederacy, accompanied by a species of soft, trickling sound. After an interval of some ten minutes, the operator saw, by this contrivance, just double the number of Confederacies he had to contend with. It only remained, then, for him to divide the number thus ascertained by two, and he knew exactly the number of his foes!

You will observe, my boy, that this singularly ingenious device at once revealed to the new General of the Mackerel Brigade the true strength of his greatest enemy, and inspired him with a strong spirit.

It was immediately after this, that the Grim Old Fighting Cox issued the following

“GENERAL ORDER.

“The manner in which the crossing of Duck Lake has been accomplished proves that this is the finest Army ever seen on the plan-it, and is likely to prove equally

fine on the do-it. I have now got the well-known Southern Confederacy where I wished to have her, and she must either ignominiously retreat, or come out of her works, and be annihilated by me on my own ground, which is ground-arms!

“(Blue Seal.)

“THE GENERAL OF THE MACKEREL BRIGADE.”

Having let fly this General Order, my boy, the Grim Old Fighting Cox proceeded to complete his surprise of the enemy by leading a bayonet charge from his side of the triangle, and immediately telegraphed to the base of the triangle that the enemies of human freedom were retreating before him. This was truly the case; for the unseemly Confederacies not only retreated before him, but retreated with such impetus of flight upon Captain William Brown at the base of the triangle, that they actually drove him clear out of his place, and proceeded to occupy the base themselves. Thus matters stood at the conclusion of the first day.

Early on the second day, the Grim Old Fighting Cox charged again upon some fresh regiments of Confederacies, who retreated with such violence that they completely pressed Captain Bob Shorty from the right line of the triangle, and remained in that line themselves. This was the second day's battle.

On the following morning, it was discovered that fresh Confederacies had come up from Paris. These were attacked irresistibly by the whole Mackerel Brigade, and only succeeded in making a stand when they formed, as it were, the left line of the triangle.

You will perceive, my boy, that a great piece of geometrical strategy had been thus achieved; but it now turned out that the General of the Mackerel Brigade had made a mistake, and a most serious one. While taking his observations with his ingenious glass instrument, he had seen just double the number of triangles (2) that might be formed by certain great strategical evolutions, as he had seen just double the number of the Confederacies; but, in his haste, he had neglected to divide the ascertained number of triangles by two, as he should have done; and now he discovered that only one triangle was formed, and that by the unseemly and chuckling Confederacies. Such a nice thing is strategy, and so easily is it deranged!

Owing to this error, of course nothing more could be done, and on Tuesday evening the Mackerel Brigade returned, full of enthusiasm, to their original side of Duck Lake. The affair had been merely a reconnoissance.

Last evening, at dusk, I was talking to the Mackerel Chaplain about this singular strategical affair, and says he:

"God help us! The skeleton regiments we have left standing are scarcely more than the skeleton regiments we have left sleeping; and only the sleeping ones can look upward."

Let gentle charity, my boy, silence our tongues to the dread mistake that is past; for he who made it lost by it the glorious immortality his meanest soldier slain has won.

Yours, gently,

ORPHEUS C. KERR.

#### LETTER XCIV.

AFFORDING AN INSTANCE OF IMPERCEPTIBLE PATRIOTISM; PRESENTING THE PROFOUND COMMENTARY OF AN EMINENT FOREIGN MILITARY CRITIC; AND REPORTING THE LAST EFFUSION OF THE GENERAL OF THE MACKEREL BRIGADE.

WASHINGTON, D. C., May 17th, 1863.

WHEN great interests are at stake, my boy, and strong passions are excited, and when it becomes necessary that a whole nation shall be unanimous for its own preservation from destruction, we occasionally meet with chaps of severe countenance and much shirt-ruffles, whose patriotism is purely that of descent, and not at all of assent. Since this great strategic war commenced, I have encountered divers iron-faced and brass-mounted conservative fellow-beings, whose sentiments in action have seemed to establish as an inevitable postulate in logic, that a man sired by a hero of '76, must naturally be damn'd by the heroes of '63; and that a man with Revolutionary blood in his veins is entirely exempted from all legitimacy to a propensity for spilling the least drop of that sacred liquid in behalf of a cause not Revolutionary. It was on Tuesday, my boy, that I met the Honorable Fernando Fuel, the member-elect from the Sixth Ward, who had come hither for the express purpose of getting up for himself an entirely new coat of arms, according to New York Heraldry, and of procuring from some scholar a recondite