

REMINISCENSES OF THE HARRIET LANE.

By CAPTAIN OF ENGINEERS, F. H. PULSIFER,
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In September, 1859, having received an appointment as Engineer in the Revenue-Cutter Service, I went to New York City and was assigned to duty on the *Harriet Lane* which had just returned from an expedition to Paraguay. This vessel was, at that time, the only steam cutter. Recently from the yards of Wm. H. Webb, with engines built by the Allaire Works, she attracted much attention in those days owing to her fine lines and high speed.

Hunting for slavers along the coasts of the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida kept us busy the first winter. I can recall no incident of special interest during that service.

The first Japanese commission to the United States was entertained on board in 1860. We took them to various points along the coast, and everywhere their presence created good natured curiosity and comment. I remember the extreme amusement among our officers and men due to the actions of the distinguished Oriental princes and statesmen, who in their gorgeous and, to us, grotesque robes, walked the deck, stretching strips of rubber and letting them snap back. It was the first rubber they had ever seen and they were getting as much amusement from it as children from a new toy.

Later in the year we had the youthful Prince of Wales (later Edward VII) on board at the time of his only visit to this country. My recollections of him are as a high-spirited, mischievous boy, friendly and inquisitive. He and his party came aboard at the Washington Navy Yard, the prince escorting President Buchanan's beautiful niece, Miss Harriet Lane. When they reached the wharf the prince insisted on her walking on the strip of crimson carpet laid for his royal feet while he walked alongside on the planking.

The prince would wander all over the cutter, from the top of the paddle boxes to the engine room and berth deck. At Mount Vernon he paid homage to the man who had wrested our country from the empire of which he was later to be the head. As an instance of the economy of the Government in those days, I may mention that the Department refused to pay for the meal served at Mount Vernon, the bills being settled personally by the Secretary of the Treasury.

We next proceeded to New York. Here hero-worship held sway—following one banquet aboard ship many plates and glasses used by the prince were carried off by enthusiastic ladies. One lady exhibited for years, no doubt, a glass which she believed had touched the lips of the Prince of Wales, but which had, to my knowledge, been substituted by the steward upon the breaking of the revered glass.

From New York we went up the Hudson to West Point. The prince displayed much interest in the river and asked many questions concerning the points of special interest. As we were passing Stony Point, the pilot, who had supplied much of the information, turned and said, "There is where we licked you fellows." A horrified lieutenant quickly cautioned him, but the Englishmen, including the prince and the Duke of Newcastle, were much amused and demanded the story of Anthony Wayne.

The captain, John Faunce, was presented with a gold watch, and eight hundred dollars was divided among the crew. The first lieutenant privately informed the Duke that the wardroom preferred not to accept anything. This was much to our chagrin; not one of us but would have been glad to have had a photograph of the prince as a memento of this interesting cruise.

As the Navy possessed, at the outbreak of the Civil War, but few modern vessels, it was glad to be reenforced by the cutters, particularly the new and speedy *Harriet Lane*. We were, therefore, transferred to the Navy by executive order, as provided by an old law dating back to 1799. About the middle of April, 1861, the *Harriet Lane* left New York, convoying a fleet of troop and provision ships, all being under the command of an assistant secretary of the Navy. After weathering a gale, we arrived off Charleston, for the purpose, as we then learned, of relieving General Anderson at Fort Sumter. I was, therefore, a witness of the bombard-

ment of that fort, the first tragic step of the awful conflict which followed. As we lay off the bar the night before the bombardment, we, with our guns held vessels back from the harbor, and thus the first shotted gun fired from the deck of a ship in the Civil War was fired by the *Harriet Lane*.

It was at night that we reached the bar, but, having outsailed the fleet, we stood off waiting for them, and in the early morning we saw the commencement of the bombardment. After the surrender we returned to New York with our expedition, which carried Major Anderson, his soldiers, and the flag of the fort. Fifty years later I received from our captain's clerk a little piece of torn bunting—it was a remnant of the flag which had flown from Fort Sumter during the bombardment.

At the Brooklyn Navy Yard we were speedily refitted, particularly as to armament, and left there with a hundred-pound rifle which made the *Lane* a formidable cruiser. Our next service took us to Baltimore convoying troop ships with soldiers intended for the defense of Washington.

While we were lying off Baltimore, Captain Faunce ordered me to dress in citizens clothes and to go ashore in the dinghy at night. I was to secure a pilot to take us down the bay. Never having been ashore at Baltimore, I was not overjoyed at the prospect as the city had a strong and hostile anti-Union element.

Finding rebel flags flying, and the talk all for secession, I kept away from the business part of the town, exchanging here and there a word with colored people, trying to find one who knew of a pilot. I do not know how many miles I tramped that night before I finally found the old darky aboard an oyster schooner, who, for a few "bits," offered to take me to the home of a pilot. Arriving there, I made an agreement with the pilot, but hearing some excited pro-southern talk in the house, I decided to conceal my identity until the last moment.

Reaching the dinghy, we pulled out into the stream, and, as we approached the cutter, the pilot, who believed he was going out to a merchantman, suddenly stood up and said, "Take me ashore; that is a Government boat." "Boat Ahoy," came from the cutter, "who are you?" Upon answering I was ordered to "come alongside" and the pilot soon found himself on our deck, unwillingly, almost rebellious-

ly taking orders from Captain Faunce. Our convoy was signalled to follow close in our wake, and the pilot, fully understanding what would happen to him if he went aground, successfully piloted us to Fortress Monroe.

For a few months thereafter we performed blockading duty, making some captures which caused visions of prize money which, for some strange reason, never materialized. This duty, together with shelling enemy land fortifications and convoying troop ships, kept us almost constantly at sea.

In June, while guarding the construction of a fortification at Newport News by Captain Greble, we received information that the Confederates were building some works across the river at a place known as Pig Point, near the mouth of the Nansemond. Reconnoitering the place, we dropped a shell ashore as a feeler and got a steady fire of solid shot in return which hulled us in several places and caused fourteen casualties.

In August we were attached to the fleet under Commodore Stringham, which was to attack a battery at Hatteras Inlet. After a heavy shelling of the positions, the *Lane* was ordered in over the bar. Captain Faunce, who knew the bottom, signalled that he could not make it at that tide. We were, nevertheless, directed to go ahead. We soon struck and, a heavy sea being on, the waves made a clean breach over us.

The succeeding events are given in the following letter written at the time:—

"Old Point Comfort,
Sept. 6, 1861.

"We arrived here yesterday morning, but I was so worn out that I could not write at once. There has been no rest on board since we left the Hatteras expedition. After the surrender of the forts we were ordered to proceed inside the bar. The water was low and we struck and drifted in the breakers. We lay there helpless for 48 hours and for the first 24 hours the sea was making a clean breach over us. The *Lane* lay on her side and all that saved us was that the seas hit the bottom of the vessel instead of the decks. The small boats were all swamped. The steamer was bent and buckled so that bolts were snapped off the bulkheads and the boilers were wrenched so that it was impossible to make steam. We finally washed over the bar at high water at 2.15 o'clock Saturday afternoon and, by the use of our large anchors, got into deep water and proceeded to our anchorage with all pumps going. To get over the bar we were obliged to throw overboard a'l our coal, shot and shell and ammunition, our big hundred-pound rifle and four 32-pound rifled cannon that overshot all the guns of the other boats at Hatteras. After patching up, we started for Hampton Roads and reached there safely yesterday."

With the capture of the fortifications we secured twenty-five heavy cannon, one thousand stands of arms, and about a thousand prisoners. On the *Harriet Lane* we had the satisfaction of learning that it was our big rifle that brought the white flag.

From Hatteras the *Lane* went to Philadelphia for repairs. Our plight at this time was deplorable—we had lost all our personal belongings while aground at Hatteras Inlet, and we had received no pay for nine months. Since our transfer to the Navy, the Treasury Department refused to continue us on its rolls as we were no longer under its authority, and the Navy Department refused to pay us as they feared, we understood, that it would be a recognition they did not wish to accord us.

We presented, consequently, a forlorn appearance when we made our way into the Girard House. There we explained our situation and stated that we expected money from Washington, but we received only a not over-courteous bowing into the street. We then went to the Continental, where our reception was very different. The management extended us every courtesy, gave us comfortable rooms, and told us that our names would carry credit in any part of the house. Soon afterward we received our pay, but not from the Navy Department which to the last maintained its position.

My active duty on the *Harriet Lane* ended here, but I will briefly mention some of her later exploits and misadventures under the Navy. After being refitted she was ordered to the Gulf and became flagship of the mortar flotilla of Admiral Porter's fleet. She took part in the attack on Fort Jackson, below New Orleans, and the first deaths in that action were on the *Lane*. She also participated in the action at Ship Island, took possession of Pensacola, and, as part of Admiral Farragut's fleet, engaged the batteries of Vicksburg. In 1863 she was captured in Galveston Harbor by the Confederates, and was successfully operated by them as a blockade runner. On a trip to Havana she was damaged by fire and fell into the hands of the Spanish authorities, by whom she was turned over to our Government at the end of the war.

Among some old papers I find a letter from Captain Faunce who was sent to Cuba to bring the *Lane* back to New York.

THE HARRIET LANE

"U. S. Steamer *Harriet Lane*
Havana, Cuba, Feby. 17th, 1867.

Dear Frank.

Your letter of the First reached me yesterday. The reason I did not get it before was it missed the mail by the *Morro Castle* and was carried to Key West. I arrived here all in good order the Friday morning following the Saturday we left and just one week from the time I left had possession of the two vessels—*Harriet Lane* and *Pelican*—and commenced at once repairing them. The *Lane* above water was very rotten in her planking. Timber in a better state of preservation and now all the work on her above water is completed ready for docking. The *Pelican* requires much more work on her engines than the *Lane*. I have had steam on the boilers of the *Lane* and worked her engines. They work well and I have no doubt that I shall be able to run her to New York on her own steam. I do not think that I will be able to get away from this place before the middle of March. * * * I wish I had you with me on this trip. * * * However, it could not be helped and the engineers I have here work well and seem to understand. * * * I wish you would send by the *Columbia* on her next trip to this place the large American flag and all the boat flags which are now on board the *Cuyahoga*. It is impossible to get flags made here.

Please present my regards to your lady and all inquiring friends and believe me truly your friend

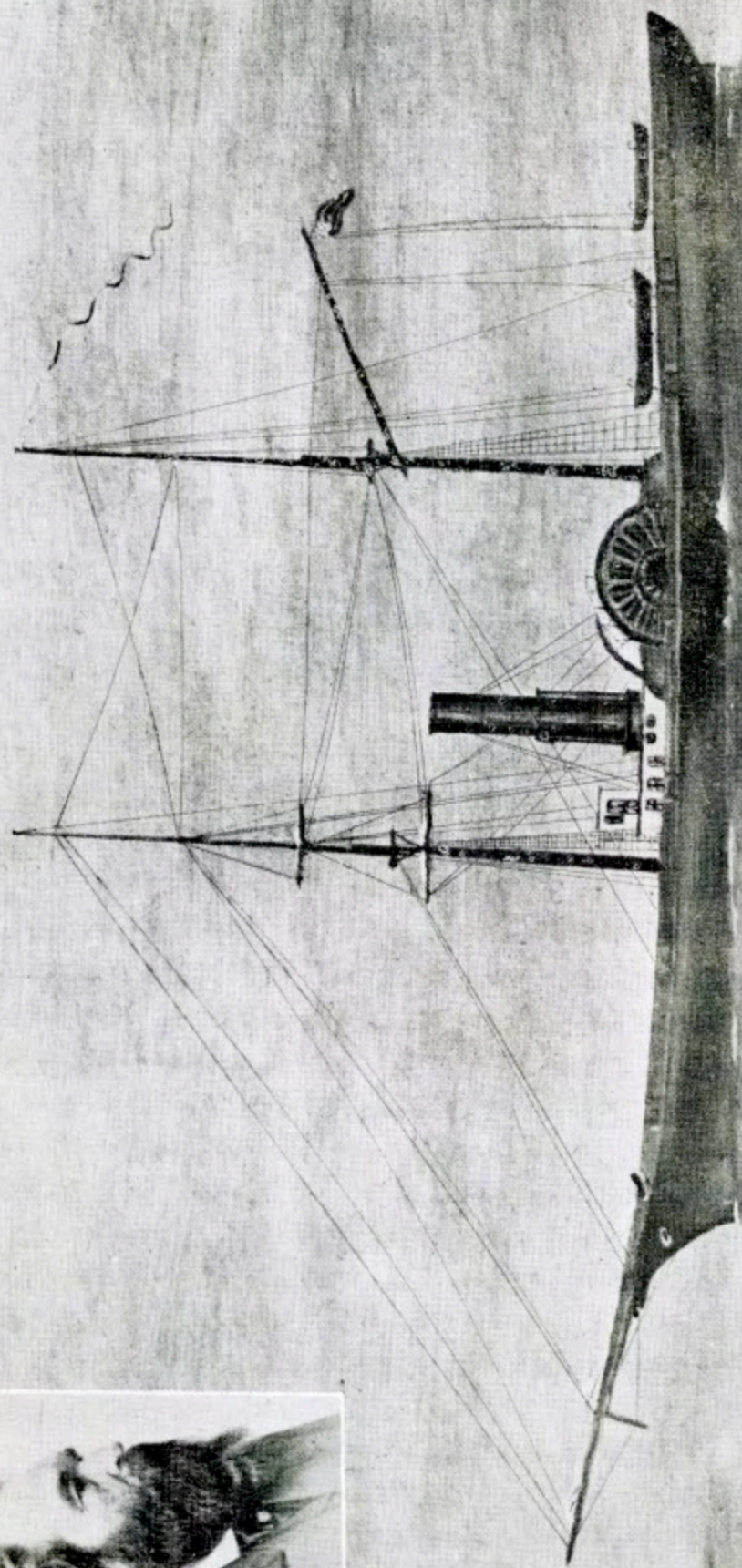
(Signed)

J. FAUNCE.

F. H. Pulsifer,
U. S. R. C. Service."

In due time Captain Faunce returned to New York with the *Lane* and the cutter was then laid up in Hoboken in my charge. Later she was sold and became the bark *Helena Ritchie*. Finally she was reported to have foundered in the Caribbean Sea during a hurricane.

I had many interesting experiences in the war following the time I was detached from the *Lane*, but I will now mention only that several times we carried President Lincoln on various expeditions. From him I received, in 1864, my commission as Chief Engineer. It has always been a matter of great pride to me that I have this paper bearing the signature of a man who, as the years go by, grows larger and larger in the estimation of the world; that I personally knew this great man whose words have recently been so aptly quoted in the English Parliament. We have not since produced, nor can we hope again to produce, so great a character.



U. S. REVENUE CUTTER *HARRIET LANE*—CAPTAIN FAUNCE