

THE CUBAN PRIVATEERS.

The Hornet Under a New Name and Master.

How She was Purchased, Transferred and Started.

Scenes at Sea as Witnessed by Our Special Correspondent on Board.

MARSHAL BARLOW IN A FOG.

AT SEA, longitude —, Sept. 27, 1869.
SCENES AT SEA.

Far out on the ocean, away from the grating breakers which but yesterday shone white and glistening in our wake, with the long, monotonous roll of the Atlantic surge, away the vessel on its crest and causing the dim lamp over my head to swing backward and forward with a regular creaking motion, I sit myself down to write the first authentic news of the Cuba, or, as she is perhaps still called in the States, the privateer Hornet. Many better communications have been written in dingy newspaper offices than this will turn out to be, but few scribes ever sat down to write under more serious difficulties than those which now oppress and distract your special correspondent. The sighing wind in the shrouds, the thunder of gun carriages being dragged and fixed into position by stalwart sailors, and the cheering and chattering of Cuban patriots on deck, together with the splash and wash of the sea breaking on our starboard, is exceedingly disquieting. And then how the timbers creak and groan, as if in anticipation of the hour when, in the course of probable events, vindictive Spanish shot and shell will whistle through them. But necessity knows no law. The copper-colored jimp detailed by the Captain to minister to the wants of the HERALD representative may jabber broken Spanish and wildly wave his significant bucket as he holds on to the uncertain door on the little six-by-four cabin, but the yawning press at the corner of Ann street, groaning for "matter," sounds a call louder and more imperative than the increasing storm. Within the last twenty minutes I have been informed that in a short time the long looked for opportunity of sending forward my despatch will be afforded me, and there is, therefore, no time to lose. I would have wished, had circumstances permitted, to send you a more particular description of the departure of this ship and of her career to the present writing, but must content myself with a very hurried, but yet perfectly reliable, account, trusting to another opportunity for a more graphic and expanded description.

I am not sure whether it would be proper for me to state how or when I came on board this craft; but—writing under editorial correction—I will venture to give a few details of the embarkation. Having a *carte blanche* as to expenditure, as all HERALD men have abroad, I took my own way of getting on board. Hearing that the steamer Hornet, owned by Mr. W—r—, of Portland, Me., was lying at Philadelphia, and being pretty well posted as to the movements of the Spanish agents and the Cuban Junta in New York, and, moreover, feeling satisfied that she was looked upon by greedy Cuban eyes, I proceeded there and placed myself in communication with certain parties who were connected with her. I speedily learned that Mr. R— had purchased her a few days before my arrival with the view of running her to Queenstown or Liverpool, stopping en route at Halifax, where he hoped to find a purchaser (simple soul) in the sprig of royalty illuminating that future State of the Union. He bought her at a very low price, and consequently felt himself in a position to swing round the ocean circle in search of a good customer. He might have had one in the Cuban Junta, but he did not think there was money there. If instructed by the Cuban leaders, however, his action could not have been more favorable to the designs of the Junta. The Hornet was under the strict surveillance of the United States authorities while in Philadelphia, but it was not entirely so strict as the watchful scrutiny of the Cuban leaders. As you are already aware, the Hornet was seized at Halifax by the British authorities, thoroughly searched, overhauled and examined. It is also well known that nothing of a criminating nature, in an international point of view, was discovered by the representatives of the government, which winked at the sailing of the Alabama, and that she was released by the Canadian authorities a few days later. Shortly after her arrival Mr. Leon Lafitte, now one of the officers of the Cuba, was appointed by Mr. R., who found that his attention was required in another place, as the supercargo of the ship. Power of attorney was given him to proceed to Queenstown or any other port and to sell the steamer to the best advantage.

Her machinery having been repaired, a full crew shipped and plenty of coal being put on board, the Hornet sailed, with a fair wind and under a full head of steam, from Halifax at eight o'clock on Sunday night, the 12th September, with her supercargo—the nominal owner—and two passengers on board. Thoroughly well informed of what was going on, your correspondent left the "Halifax Hotel," where he was stopping under a *nom de plume* during the examination of the Hornet, and under the guidance of one of the crew who was detailed by the commander for the purpose, and with scanty luggage, went on board with safety and was duly introduced and provided with a berth. No time was lost in weighing anchor after all the necessary preparations had been made, and we stood out of the harbor at a slashing rate. The next morning, after the decks were washed and everything made taught, the land being dimly seen in the distance and far in our wake, one of the passengers, after first swallowing a cup of coffee, handed him by a ghostly-looking steward, to steady his nerves, approached the supercargo, who was nervously pacing the deck before the wheel, and spoke something in a quiet tone. Some conversation followed, and then everybody understood that negotiations were on foot for the purchase of the vessel. The passenger proved to be a duly accredited agent of the Cuban government, who was prepared to offer such terms to the supercargo as could not be refused short of madness. The supercargo, having the interests of the owners in view, closed with the offer, and the money being paid down, a formal transfer was made. I did not ascertain the amount, nor have I since; but judging from the size of the roll of bank bills placed in the hands of the smiling supercargo it must have been large. The bill of sale was signed and delivered "at sea, September 31, 1869, in the presence of two or more witnesses." The Hornet was then declared the property of the republic of Cuba and her course was immediately altered to suit circumstances. The next day, being far out at sea, we sighted a schooner right ahead and standing toward her and one was surprised to find that she was a vessel that left before us with a number of men from Halifax, who were duly transferred to our decks and received with three times three and a tiger. Hardly had these men finished fraternizing with our hitherto limited crew when on the disk of the horizon a white speck, which grew into the form of a full-rigged ship, disclosed itself to our view, and after an hour more, aided by the sharp sou'easter which had sprung up in the meantime, we ran alongside her, and found to our unspeakable satisfaction that she had on board a number of Parrot guns and a large quantity of ammunition. Although the sea was rolling heavily, and the white waves jumped against the sides of our craft in impotent fury, the officers set about the task of transferring the precious cargo, and before the sun began to blink and wink over the disturbed sea, behind which he was apparently sinking to rest, everything was on board and properly secured. Some difficulty had evidently been anticipated by the officers of the Hornet at this critical juncture, anxious glances being cast from the quarter deck on the curious, gaping crowd that filled the waist and forward part of the vessel; but the result proved that there was no occasion for anxiety. To a man the crew were in full sympathy and accord with the officers. They had not been consulted regarding the change of destination, but when open-mouthed guns began to creep slowly on the deck from the creaking davits and they were called upon to assist in stowing them away they did so willingly and with hearty cheers. It was midnight. A few stars blinked from under dark masses of clouds, the waves dashed madly past, as in sympathy with the excitement which every officer and man experienced, and the wild wind loose among the taut shrouds whistled merrily. The pale beams of the moon fell athwart the deck, and in the shadows under the bulwarks forms of men hauling and laboring at the heavy metal were dimly seen moving about. Cheerily the voices of the men rang out, and cheerily were they answered by the officers, encouraging them, but working like the rest. As each gun came on board it was christened by the sailors. "Here comes Old Iron Grant," be jabers!" cried a lusty Hibernian, hauling on a rope for the bare life; "Jump along, Old Farragut," cried another, jumping himself to clear his toes of the impending muzzle; "Viva Cespedes!" yelled a Cuban in ecstasy, as the burnished back of a splendid piece was seen over the bulwarks. And so the guns were christened by the men who will use them for Cuban independence. It is probable

that before I again see the spire of old Trinity I shall witness many strange sights and participate in many a strange encounter. But while I live that weird and romantic scene, at the dead of night, under the moonlight and in the midst of the heaving ocean, will not be forgotten.

The guns having been secured and the ammunition properly placed, the men congregated round the officers, the officers under the flag of the Cuban republic, flying from the peak, and the Hornet was rebaptized the "Cuba," while her sharp prow was being turned in the direction of the enemies of the infant republic, manifest destiny and the Monroe doctrine. The first man-of-war in the service of Cuba, she yielded to the breeze, and with sails and steam plunged madly forward at the rate of eighteen knots an hour. Her officers say she can make twenty-two knots on a wind with a full head of steam, but except in case of great emergency I don't wish to see any such speed myself; the vibration is enough now to shake the teeth out of any one less determined to hold on to his mastication than your correspondent. As we may all be hanged one of these days I wish to state here for the information of the Spanish authorities that Mr. Leon Lafitte is entitled to be strangled more than anybody else, he having first run up the flag with the single star on the good ship Cuba. I do not think it safe in this letter to be too particular in my description of the ship, for obvious reasons, and have purposely omitted to mention many matters of interest, lest our cruising ground should be discovered. When, however, our track becomes illuminated with the flames of burning Spanish ships further concealment will be unnecessary, and I will then, if opportunity is afforded me, send you a long and minute account.

I may perhaps obtain permission before I close to send you the roster of the Cuba, with short biographical notices of each of the principal officers, but at the present moment everything is so much in confusion it would be impossible to approach the proper officer. I will content myself now by stating that the Cuba is well armed and equipped and commanded by a distinguished officer, who won his epaulets in the United States Navy and who also held a high position in the service of the defunct Confederacy.

We are now steaming southward, and before many hours our trusty guns will belch forth our mission in the Gulf in thunder tones.

While waiting for the required permission to give the list of officers, and pending our arrival at the point where I am informed a schooner is waiting to take our last despatches, I will offer a few observations on the question of the legal status of this vessel which may not be considered out of place.

I noticed before our departure that, commenting on the probability of the Hornet being intended for a Cuban privateer, some of the journals committed themselves to the opinion that any vessel sailing under the Cuban flag for warlike purposes could not be regarded in any other light by the commanders of foreign men-of-war than as a pirate. My sense of the proprieties in the case being quickened somewhat by a choking sensation about the throat, the more I dwell on this subject, and my legal wits being somewhat sharpened in consequence, I feel somewhat dogmatic, but nevertheless I have every confidence that my arguments in favor of our legitimacy cannot be gainsayed. The writers I have alluded to are evidently ignorant of the first principles of international law.

The Cuba is not liable to pursuit by United States cruisers because she left a United States port in a perfectly legal manner, entered a foreign port, and was subsequently armed and manned on the high seas by a foreign government. Nor is she liable to pursuit by British men-of-war, because she left Halifax legally and with full permission of the British authorities. That she was armed, manned and equipped at sea and duly transferred from one owner to another, is admitted. All this was perfectly within the law of nations. Then again the Cuba is a regular man-of-war, belonging to a government recognized in fact, if not in law; the officers each and every one have received their commissions from the Executive of the Cuban republic, and wear the national uniform. Therefore she cannot be considered a pirate by any nation. It is really one of those cases where there is nobody to blame and nobody is responsible. The Cuba will go into commission in a Cuban port and afterwards commence operating. In concluding this hasty letter I will add as the result of my observations and inquiries that the officers are gentlemen, and are not only skilled and tried veterans, but men of character and education, and that the most perfect discipline prevails on board. It is promised, and I fully believe it, that in all our doings the most strict principles of civilized warfare will be carried out, and that the brutal deeds of the Spanish will not be imitated.

The Alabama Expedition.

Yesterday Marshal Barlow, in reply to members of the press, representing the various city papers, positively denied the statements made to the effect that the steamship Alabama had landed at Key West a force of Cuban filibusters, said to have embarked on her at this port. He says he is sure no such expedition started from this port. Marshal Barlow is grievously at fault, and does not desire to "acknowledge the corn," but the Alabama did sail from this port during the night of Sunday, the 28th ult., and the writer of this paragraph has personal knowledge of the fact.

Marshal Barlow Not Up to Time—He Wants the Cuban Privateers Detained—More Recruits for Cuba—American and Spanish Cruisers.

FERNANDINA, Fla., Oct. 2, 1869.

United States Marshal Barlow, of New York, telegraphed to the Collector at this port to-day, making inquiries regarding the reported sailing of a Cuban expedition from this port. The Marshal is anxious to have the vessels intercepted and wanted them detained, but they had all sailed.

Two hundred recruits for the Cuban army arrived here to-day from Macon, Ga. They intend to sail to-night for Cuba.

An American revenue cutter and three Spanish gunboats are off Cedar Keys on the lookout for Cuban reinforcements.

Reports Regarding the Lillian and Teaser.

NEW ORLEANS, Oct. 2, 1869.

The steamship Lillian left Pass a l'Ouvre at half-past four o'clock this morning for Florida ports. The steamer Teaser is still here, with no preparation for sea.

Views of the Government Regarding the Hornet—She is Not Considered a Privateer.

WASHINGTON, Oct. 2, 1869.

The government has not decided to take any action in the case of the Cuban privateer Hornet, nor is it probable that she will be interfered with except she commits some depredations on American commerce. Ordinarily, an armed vessel sailing under an unrecognized flag is regarded as a pirate; but it is known that the administration does not regard the Hornet in this light. She is not owned by private individuals, and she sails under the flag of a government which has put armies in the field and is at present waging war with considerable success against Spain. The administration takes the view that under the circumstances the Hornet cannot be considered strictly a pirate, and that according to the best interpretation of international law the United States is not bound to send out cruisers to capture her.