HEROIC DEEDS OF HEROIC MEN.

BY JOHN S. C. ABBOTT.

X.—CHARLES ELLET AND HIS NAVAL STEAM RAMS.

The discovery of gunpowder and the introduction of steam-power have revolutionized the practice of war, though the art remains essentially the same as ever. The spear has been dropped for the rifle, and the chariot has been replaced by the cannon. More than two centuries have passed since these improvements in warfare were first noticed and experimented with. The power of the ram and the ship's gun have increased, and with them has come the power of making the water a highway and a war-ground.

Revolution in Modes of Warfare.—Steam Rams.—Merrimac and Monitor.—Sketch of the Life of Charles Ellet.—His Public Services.—His Comprehensive Plan for Western Rivers.—Correspondence with the Navy Department.—Letter to the President.—Rebel Force on the Mississippi.—Alfred W. Ellet.—The Ram Fleet.—Naval Battle.—Death of Colonel Ellet.—Charles Rivers Ellet.—Adventures on the Yazoo.—Running the Batteries.—Loss of the Queen of the West.—Career of the Indiana.—Death of Charles R. Ellet.

The discovery of gunpowder and the introduction of steam-power have revolutionized the practice of war, though the art remains essentially the same as ever. The spear has been dropped for the rifle, and the chariot has given place to the cannon. For more than two centuries the improvements in warfare have been mainly in experimenting with gunpowder and in means for resisting its effects. England, France, and America have been foremost in the race of discovery and ingenuity. The prize has been, especially of late, naval supremacy. "Who rules the sea rules the land," is the maxim, while the converse is not equally true. The contest has been finally narrowed down to one of ordnance and of armor. From the field, or rather from the sea, the question is transferred to the foundry and the shipyard.

The problem is to construct a navigable vessel which, while invulnerable, is powerful for offense. Each has in turn kept producing heavier guns, which has necessitated heavier armor. It was reserved for America to enlighten the world on this as it has on many important subjects. We had found the available form which offered the best resistance to ordnance. We could construct a vessel which can not be sunk or pierced by ordinary weight of metal; but we have not yet constructed one which may not be run down by a weapon especially adapted for the purpose. The struggle between guns and plates is still undecided. But it is evident that a change in the character of naval warfare is impending, the importance of which is not sufficiently appreciated.

Steam, although long used both on land and water as a transporting agent, has never been adopted as a direct instrument of war itself. Although less terrible and destructive than gunpowder, it possesses advantages of production and control which will make it ere long probably a formidable instrument of war. The first person to advocate and illustrate the advantages of steam as a weapon for naval warfare was Charles Ellet, the originator and commander of the famous ram fleet on the Mississippi. Others have indeed speculated upon the possibilities of fighting with steam, but to him supereminently belongs the merit of having first given it practicable shape, as also the distinction of dying a martyr to its demonstration.

All will recollect how, a very few months ago, the nation was startled by the announcement that two powerful steam rams were lying in the Mersey, with which, it was believed, the rebels might raise the blockade; and how much we were relieved when the British Government seized and afterward purchased them, showing its sense of their value by paying for them while unfinished more than a million of dollars in coin. Nor can we overlook the performances of the rebel rams in the waters of North Carolina, in Mobile Bay, at Savannah, at Charleston, and elsewhere.

Let us recall the memorable 8th of March, 1862, when the Merrimac made her appearance in Hampton Roads, and was literally having it all her own way with our fleet there. General Wool telegraphed that he expected she would pass out into the ocean and prey on our blockading squadrons. With what breathless anxiety did we listen to the particulars of her resistless onset upon and into the Cumberland, crushing in the oaken sides of the massive frigate as if they had been made of laths, and in three-fourths of an hour sinking her, with a large portion of her crew, in the bottom of the bay. The iron-clad monster then turned upon the Congress, and disdainfully shaking her from the coal of mail the most ponderous shot and shells, deliberately chose her position, and in a few moments smashed the proud ship of war into a wreck. Flames were kindled. The sinking ship became a caldron of fire. The
wounded were consumed in the conflagration. A spark reaches the magazine. There is a thunder roar. The air is filled and the sea covered for a moment with burning fragments, and the ship has disappeared forever. And now the triumphant Merrimac, flushed with victory, turns upon two other United States frigates. But seeing them both aground, and having no fear of their escape, the conqueror, in his impenetrable coat of mail, returns to his lair, behind Craney Island, to come out again and finish his work on the morrow.

The awful tidings ran along the wires to the remotest city in our land. None can forget the anguish of that night, or the dread with which the morning was awaited. How great was the relief when it was known that the Monitor had, in the night, crept into that bay! And how miraculous was the salvation it wrought! Had the Merrimac possessed the speed and power of a ram, instead of being mainly a floating battery, the little Monitor would speedily have disappeared beneath the waves. No missile which either vessel could throw could pierce the armor of the other. A powerful ram would have demolished either.

As a new, important, and original application of principles well known in naval warfare, the claim of invention of the Ram is worth more than a passing notice. The navies of the leading nations already show signs of adopting and incorporating the ram principle. It may be interesting to know something of its inception and history. The name of Ericsson is indelibly connected with the history of the great rebellion, and with naval science in general. So is the name of Ellet entitled to most prominent mention as the man who not only contributed largely to the resources of his country in his profession, but who also rendered his country inestimable service by his origination, construction, and command of the Steam Ram Fleet of the Mississippi. A brief sketch of the life of this eminent man can not but be of service to his countrymen.

Charles Ellet was born on the 1st of January, 1810, at Bucks Manor, Berks County, Pennsylvania. His first years were spent on the farm of his father, and his first education was gained from the teachings of his noble mother. At sixteen he was sent to Bristol school, where he showed great aptitude for classics and mathematics. Two years later he became assistant surveyor to Judge Wright, of Maryland. In less than three years, with his savings, he went to Paris to complete his education. Returning, after two years of study, to his former position, he was soon appointed Assistant Engineer on the James River and Kanawha Canal, then in construction, of which he afterward became chief.

During this period, about the 34th year of his age, he advocated the use of wire suspension bridges, and proposed to the authorities of Georgetown to bridge the Potomac. The plan was rejected on account of his extreme youth. On the 31st of October he was married to a most amiable lady, the daughter of Judge Daniel, of Lynchburg, Virginia. Two years he spent in various works at the West, and there became impressed with the boundless possibilities of the great valley of the Mississippi. He had before published a work, which is a thorough and exhaustive treatment of the economy of traffic by road, canal, railway, and river. As such his calculations were much used both in this country and Europe, though not always with an acknowledgment of the author.

In 1840 he proposed to the city and council of St. Louis to build a wire bridge across the Mississippi. But the proposition was rejected. The following year he constructed the suspension bridge across the Schuykill, at Fairmount, a beautiful structure, and the first upon this continent. He was subsequently engaged on several of the most important roads, canals, and bridges then in course of building; and indeed, there are few of the great projects for public improvement of that time which did not receive the benefit of his professional counsel.

In 1847 he commenced the suspension bridge at Wheeling for the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, one thousand feet span, the longest in the world. At the same time he threw across the temporary bridge at Niagara Falls, which was afterward replaced by the present noble edifice by Mr. Roebling.

From that time his reputation was deservedly great as a civil engineer. During his connection with the Hampfield and Virginia Central railways he made several visits to Europe, where he was received as one of the heads of his profession. In 1848-9, at Wheeling, while engaged on the bridge, he made a series of observations and calculations on the Ohio River, with a view to the improvement of its navigation. It is well known that the waters of the Ohio are subject to great floods and corresponding droughts. This tendency increases, as the country is settled, by the rapid drainage. The depth of water on the bar at Wheeling varies from twenty inches to more than forty feet. Mr. Ellet shrewdly conceived that by hoarding the excess of water it might be rendered serviceable for navigation, besides averting the great damage by floods. His calculations and surveys were published in the Transactions of the Smithsonian Institute. His plan was, in effect, to make of the Ohio River a canal one thousand miles long, which should be navigable at all seasons for boats of ordinary tonnage.

Although Mr. Ellet was a Civil Engineer, he was soon after, contrary to the usual practice, chosen by the War Department to survey the Lower Mississippi. The inhabitants of Louisiana complained to Congress that the periodical inundations were sweeping away and destroying millions in actual property, besides arresting the development of the State. His...
report to the Government, with that on the Ohio, are published in one volume,* and comprise at this day the most comprehensive and exact knowledge we have of the Mississippi valley and its confluent streams.

Mr. Ellet found that the use of dykes, or levees, along the banks caused the water to rise higher between them, because the river was previously wont to fill the swamps adjacent. Either fresh outlets must be formed for the tremendous accumulation of water somewhere above the present delta, or the levees must be raised indefinitely, at an enormous cost, and with a continual danger of breaking away. His remedy proposed for the navigation of the Ohio seemed to be the most natural, the most secure, and the cheapest, as well as the most beneficial to apply to the Mississippi. He advocated the building of dams on the Ohio or other tributaries, to improve their navigation and secure the lower valley from inundation, and urged Congress to adopt the work for the general benefit of the country.

Colonel Bailey, on a small scale, turned the expedient to good account, on the Red River, in extirpating the gun-boat flotilla.

It will be remembered that in the disastrous Red River Expedition conducted by General Banks, in April, 1864, the gun-boats, in retreat from the river, Grand Ecore to Alexandria, were arrested in their progress by the shallow water at Grand Rapids, just above Alexandria. The flotilla was thus caught in a trap. The army was compelled to remain at Alexandria to protect the gun-boats.

Colonel Bailey extricated the fleet from its desperate situation. He constructed two solid pliers, projecting from either shore, so as to dam the waters of the river, throwing a strong current into the centre, thus creating sufficient depth of water to float the boats down the stream. The rapid current of the river and the scarcity of materials for building the dams rendered it a work of great labor. It was, however, accomplished in the course of a fortnight, and the fleet was saved. The skill and energy of Colonel Bailey in this achievement were so conspicuous that, by a joint resolution of Congress, there was tendered to him the thanks of the nation.

Mr. Ellet, by actual survey, pointed out the sites for the dams on the Ohio, and demonstrated that their cost and management were insignificant compared with their efficiency. That they would produce the effect desired he claimed was matter of scientific proof. Taking the two plans together, for the Mississippi and the Ohio, they present a grand scheme of public improvement, by which, at the same time, and by the same expedient, the navigation of the great rivers of the West may be improved, and their borders relieved and ultimately protected from inundation, and the whole valley rendered habitable.

When we consider that the area drained by the Mississippi is a million and a quarter of square miles, and that ten thousand miles of its streams are navigable, we may gain some idea of the bold and magnificent scheme by which he proposed to maintain the navigation of the great rivers through the droughts of summer, by supplying to their volume of water from artificial lakes or reservoirs, to be constructed on the tributary streams. The plan thus suggested, though received at first as a wild and chimerical project, has won its way to public confidence. The city of Pittsburgh formally petitioned Congress to adopt the plan, with a view to military defense as well as navigation. The Emperor of the French has tried the plan on a small scale. It is not improbable that there may be those now living who will see the plan realized, and who may regard its projection as one of the most beneficent steps in the world's history.

It is not a little singular that Mr. Ellet should have contemplated this as the great work of his life. So much was he impressed with its usefulness and grandeur that he named his son, in honor of the work, Charles Rivers Ellet. How strange, indeed, that the father and the son should have perished in the effort to improve the navigation of the Mississippi by a plan of their discovery, but still by one so different from that which the father had originally contemplated!

It was in the winter of 1854–5, at Lausanne, in Switzerland, that home of wandering savages, during the siege of Sebastopol, when the Russians spoke of sinking their splendid fleet, that Mr. Ellet first revolved in his mind the plan of protecting and strengthening war vessels, so that they might be used as rams, that thus, instead of sinking their fleet the Russians might sink that of their allies, and raise the blockade of the harbor. In December, probably, he wrote to the Russian Government giving a detailed statement of his plan, which was thankfully received; but in consequence of the death of the Emperor soon after was overlooked and never acted upon. In the following April (26th) he addressed a letter to the Secretary of War, through Mr. John Y. Mason, our Minister at Paris, with the same propositions. These, with a reply and rejoinder from our Navy Department, were afterward published (Richmond, 1855) in pamphlet form, and circulated widely both in the South and in Europe. We were at that time slightly menaced with war with England on the right of search question.

In his prefatory note, dated Richmond, December 1, 1855, Mr. Ellet says:

"People are accustomed to regard the art of naval warfare as the art of manuvering cannon, and throwing shot and shell. I wish them to reflect upon the power of a moving steamboat driven against the enemy who has no means of resistance but his batteries, and to dokide which is the more certain warfare. I wish, therefore, to compare the number of fighting steamers which may be sent to any port in the United States from the shores of Europe with the number of river steamers, coasting steamers,
This remarkable pamphlet, upon which must be bused his claims to the patience of the steam ram, is so forcible and explicit, that it should be given entire did space allow. Like all he ever wrote, it is clear, earnest, well reasoned, and perfect in style. He says:

"My plan is simply to convert the steamer into a battering ram, and to enable her to fight, not with her guns, but with her momentum. In short, I propose to strengthen the steamer throughout, in the most substantial manner, so that she may run head on into the enemy, or burst in his ribs, or drive a hole into his hull below the waterline. A hole only two feet square, four feet under water, will sink an ordinary frigate in sixteen minutes."

He then minutely details the altering or building of ships for his purpose. And then, he adds:

"I have read accounts of five or six accidental collisions at sea in the last six months; sometimes by steamers running into sailing vessels, and sometimes by sailing vessels running into steamers; and in every case the vessel struck in the waist was sunk, and the vessel which ran into her was able to keep on her course. For harbor defense, however, in which we may continue to build and arm forts and batteries, I think we should not neglect also to build floating batteries—rams—great steamers, as near shot and shell proof as they can be made, with a strength of hull, speed, and power, that will enable them to crush in the side of a man-of-war by simple collision.

"To my understanding the efficacy of the plan which I recommend is self-evident. And I hold myself ready to carry it out in all its details whenever the day arrives that the United States is about to become engaged in naval contest."

To this letter the following remarkable answer was returned:

"NAVY DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C., March 19, 1855.

Sir,—The receipt of your letter of the 20th ult. is acknowledged, and the department tenders you its thanks for the views expressed therein. The suggestion to convert steamers into battering rams and by the momentum make them a means of sinking an enemy's ships, was proposed as long ago as 1852, and has been renewed many times since by various officers of the navy. No practical test has been undertaken; but with the necessary speed, strength, and weight, a large steamer on the plan proposed you would introduce an entire change in naval warfare.

"Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

"CHARLES W. WALCK,

"Acting Secretary of the Navy."

In reply to this, Mr. Elliott, on the 16th of August, sent another letter to the Navy Department, through Mr. Buchanan, then our Minister in London, in which letter he still more strenuously urges the adoption of his plan. The Secretary of the Navy, J. C. Dobbin, in a very courteous reply, dismissed the subject, stating that the department had no power, but by special vote of Congress, "to undertake the construction of proper vessels and machinery for experimenting."

In the letter which elicited this last reply Mr. Elliott discusses the objections which are likely to be raised against his plan, such as that his own vessel might be sunk or hopelessly damaged in engines or vital parts by the collision or by hostile shot. With our late remarkable experience we can see that these objections fall to the ground. But from the data before him he reasoned correctly that the danger from collision would be immensely against the vessel struck; and in the danger from shot, he entered into a nice calculation of the probabilities of a vessel being struck in a vital part, between the points of extreme range and that of close contact, by which he showed that the chances were reduced to an inapprreciable fraction.

When we consider how the allied fleet bombarded the fortress of Sewanog, defended by about 800 guns for the space of forty-five hours, without suffering the loss of a single man by the enemy's shot, "in consequence of the continual movement of the ships," as the Russian General alleged, and as we also recall some very remarkable engagements of our own in the late war, we may appreciate the precision of our advocates. The bombardment of Port Royal and the experience of blockade-runners confirm the results of his calculations.

Among the cases of accidental collisions cited are several remarkable ones, all tending to the support of his theory. The well-known sinking of the Arctic by the Vesta, with great loss of life; the Wellington, of 181 guns, damaged by a sailing ship; the Imperatrice steamer sunk almost immediately by the schooner Commerce; the Victoria ship, sunk in two minutes by a small Sardinian steamer; the brigantine Henry, run into by a diminutive steamer and lost immediately.

In 1843 the Hudson River steamer Empire, coming into New York with a new pilot on a misty morning, ran fairly into a new wharf, with the full power of the engine, forcing the bow of the boat through the timber facing of logs 18 inches square, then through a solid stone filling 84 feet thick, and then through earth and rubbish 17 feet further, making a chasm of 12 feet wide at the logs, 27 feet long, and 17 feet deep. The only injury sustained by the boat was the breaking of one of her oblique braces and a slight leak at the stern.

Now if such is the effect of a frail river steamer upon an object of this sort, what must be expected of a vessel built and armed for the very purpose of a ram? There is another example, memorable for the tragic, mysterious manner in which it occurred. It may be recollected that, a few years ago, an American vessel, with an English captain, was hired, it is supposed, to run down a Russian ship of war in the Baltic. He strengthened his bows with solid timber, and followed the war vessel out of St. Petersburg, and in the gray of dawn next morning, when near the Categat, while his crew were asleep or below decks, he took the helm himself and ran into the Russian ship with the power of sails merely, and instantaneously sunk her with her crew of three hundred souls.

"The practical conclusion," says Mr. Elliott, "to be drawn from these facts is apparent. If vessels are built for ordinary commercial purposes and propelled either by steam or sail invariably sink the vessels they strike with their bow, when running with any considerable velocity while themselves receiving but little injury from the collision. It follows of necessity, that a steamer expressly designed
for such conflict, well fortified at the bow, strongly built throughout, divided longitudinally and centrally by a solid partition, reaching from keelson to deck and from stem to stem, and transversely by other partitions, separating the hull into six or eight water-tight compartments, and horizontally by one or more partitions or floors of which one shall be below the water-line when light—I say it follows of necessity that such a vessel skillfully framed and properly fastened, may be driven at high speed against any ship of ordinary construction. In the certainty that the ship struck will go down and the battering ship float."

All this, which is familiar knowledge to us in 1865, was foreseen and reasoned out in 1855. At that time Mr. Ellet was living in Ichmond. His views, as set forth by his pamphlet, addresses to Congress, and by conversation and newspaper communications, were all well known. Here, indeed, is the germ of the idea wrought out but partially by the rebels after their seizure of the Navy-yard at Norfolk. To the suggestion that the enemy could strengthen his ships and meet them, ram with ram, it is only necessary to add that this is a fundamental condition of all civilized warfare, and will occur under every species of construction, armament, or defense.

Coming to the priority of claims to invention we should premise that the ram (Aries) is of ancient date as a warlike instrument. In the battles between the Greeks and Phcenicians, they used their ships a metal-covered prow, rostrum, with which to crash in the sides of their opponents, and mention is made of a pyramid of these vanquished vessels, columna rostrata, in Rome at a late date. It is, however, the steam ram with which we are now concerned. The first mention of it, according to the "London Engineer," is to be attributed to Sir Isaac Cuffin, of the British Navy in 1824. This mention is, however, incidental in his system of steam maneuvering, and the ram principle is quite subordinate to guns in his estimate. The next is the one referred to in the letter of Mr. Welch, of the United States Navy Department. Commodore Barron, it appears, in 1832, drew up a system of steam tactics for naval vessels, which in his own words, "was highly efficacious in attack and defense upon sea which is destined to effect as great a revolution in naval warfare as steam has in transportation both on sea and land."

The Navy Department has not published this nor any of the subsequent plans referred to; but enough is seen from the discussions of that time to discover that the ram principle was but dimly discerned. Steam was then in its infancy, and the so-called plans were regarded then as they are now, as visionary and conjectural in character, speculating as to what might ultimately be done with steam rather than specifying how it was to be done. In fact, the ram theory boded and for many years after was discarded. Indeed the wonder is so little was done or said on the subject, as with the example of the ancients before them the plan of sinking an enemy's ship by running it down is one which might suggest itself to any thoughtful person, and has incidentally been used before the in production of steam. By a well-known rule of law, and a very obvious and natural one too, it is not sufficient to hint at or suggest an improvement, but it must be demonstrated in order to claim the patent of invention.

Sir Howard Douglass, an eminent English naval authority, admits that it was not until the French had begun building a powerful ram in 1858, or rather a powerful iron ship of war, with a projecting iron prow, called a "beak" or "rhinoceros," that the British gave any serious attention to the subject, and then only to ridicule it. In 1859 the British Government ordered a ram to be built on the Thames. But the mere mention of her proportions shows how obscurely they had entertained the true theory of the proposed change. Like her French predecessor she was to be heavily armored, carrying 86 guns, and when ready for sea was to be of 9000 tons burden, 1200 horse-power, and 26 feet draught. In short, this idea of making the ram a mere adjunct to the floating battery—an irreconcilable difference of function—was constantly copied and repeated until the present war, and including the Merrimac.

The Stevens battery, commenced in 1841, was no exception, her great draught and length unfitting her for a serviceable ram. The Dunderberg, commenced twenty years later, repeated the mistake, and is essentially a floating battery. The error which seems to have affected all naval architects in the construction of rams up to the time of Mr. Ellet, has been in ascribing too much importance to weight, whereas he showed that the crushing power of a vessel was the weight multiplied by the velocity. Mr. Nasmyth, in 1860, stated before the Royal Society for the advancement of science, that the subject of steam rams was an old subject with him; that as early as 1845 he had proposed it, and that "now he felt confident it would be quite possible to construct a vessel which would dash into the Warrior like a bandbox." So also in 1861, Mr. Donald McRay, the eminent American ship-builder, earnestly advocated their use in a letter to the Navy Department.

At the outbreak of the rebellion Mr. Ellet's mind was greatly agitated on this subject, and he repeatedly urged its importance on the Navy Department, upon the President, and upon members of Congress. After the seizure of the Norfolk Navy-yard, and when the report came that the rebels were converting frigates and powerful steamers, both on the coast and on the Mississippi, into iron-clad rams, his alarm and impatience knew no bounds. He besieged his personal friends, even to the verge of importance, to induce the Government to take action before it was too late. In a printed memorial to Congress dated at Georgetown, February 6, 1862, just a month before the appearance of the Merrimac, he used these words:

"Steam Rams.—It is not generally known that the rebels now have five steam rams nearly ready for use. Of these four are on the Lower Mississippi, two are at Mobile, and one is at Norfolk. The last of the five is doubtless the most formidable, being the steam frigate Merri-
more enterprising enemy was carrying off the locomotive engines and cars from under his guns.
With his fine spirit thus chafed, Mr. Ellet indited his famous letter to the President in October, 1861, on "The Army of the Potomac and its Mismangement." He wrote:

"You are aware, Sir, that I have been for many weeks vainly endeavoring to obtain an interview with Major General McClellan for the purpose of submitting to him the evidence that the rebel army, which has so long threatened a movement into the rich and populous regions of the North, is wholly dependent for its existence upon an organized body on the Orange and Alexandria Railroad, and the extensions of that work to Richmond, and to the West and Southwest: That the destruction of that road and its motive power, as matters now stand, would be equivalent to the destruction and disarray of the armory and its stores, linten, munitions of war, and reinforcements; that this road and all its connections with the North of James River are very deficient of locomotive engines and rolling-stock; vital facts, upon which I had a right to ask to be heard, because an engineer long in the actual professional control of large portions of these works, I was necessarily very familiar with their condition.

"Based upon these facts, I desired to submit to the Commanding General a plan by which at least exceedingly deficient supply of locomotive engines could be almost immediately increased; the road entirely reduced; the railroad system of the North which sustains the rebel army, and all its tributaries, could be for a season disabled; and how a strong division might then be placed between that army, thus crippled, and the sources of supply, both to prevent it from restoring its communications and to cut off its inevitable retreat.

"The plan, in fact, contemplated the immediate and entire destruction of the insurgent army almost without bloodshed, and it was believed, in the first instance, to be submitted to the General in command, and he would have the prudence to act upon them with absolute secrecy and prompt dispatch.

"Although General McClellan knew of my long connection with these works, and of my intimate local knowledge, I was obliged, in order to procure a brief interview with him, to develop parts of my plan to yourself, to several members of your Cabinet, to General Scott, and gentlemen of his Staff, to General McClellan's Aid, and to other distinguished persons, and with all these efforts, supported by your own written request that he would hear me, so great success, was the pre-eminently the General's time, that I was finally obliged to abandon the effort as hopeless.

"I would not have passed through this ordeal for any consideration, for the interest of my own patriotic country. I was willing to submit to any sacrifice where so deep a stake was involved as the prompt suppression of this most foul and wicked rebellion.

"While thus patiently visiting the General's head-quarters, day after day, to offer with my life to destroy your enemy's means of transportation, and with the destruction of that transportation to terminate the war in Virginia, the General himself, apparently unconscious of the magnitude of the issue involved, allowed that enemy to come over both the Cate-teen Mountain and the Blue Ridge and seize the great locomotive engines on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad, and carry them away, over the mountains and valleys, in sight of the watch-towers of our own camps on the Upper Potomac.

"Let me repeat the statement of a transparent fact. The true base of the rebel army of the Potomac is Manassas Junction. From that point all supplies are now conveyed to the army north of the Junction by common teams.

"But south of this true base—unlike the great armies of past times—they have no common road transportation, but depend wholly on their railways. These railways, and the country which they traverse, from Manassas-Junction to the Potomac, are, in a military point of view, entirely unprotected. Even now you may strike in south of that position almost any where with a small division under a valiant leader, and secure almost entire control of these railways and machinery, as you advance to prevent pursuit by the rebel army of the Potomac, and
avoiding the large cities if you have not force sufficient to take them. It will be unnecessary to invest those cities, even to render them harmless. By temporarily crippling their railroads and canals merely, they will be sufficiently invested.

"By thus disabling the unprotected railroads and machinery south of Minnesota, you will at once place the rebel army before Washington, starved and helpless, at the mercy of your General here—provided he is then able to put any part of his vast, patriotic, and fiery masses in forward motion."

What a commentary is this upon the strategy of those unhappy times! The publication of this pamphlet caused much and angry discussion which led to the publication of a second on the same subject. Experience, however, proved that Mr. Ellet was right. The rebel army was finally crippled and destroyed by the destruction of its communications. Both of these pamphlets are remarkable performances. In the second Mr. Ellet says:

"The rebellion is not, as it is represented in anonymous publications from the head-quarters of the army to be, on the eve of its final overthrow. Ignorance and puerile imbecility cannot overthrow it. Victories upon victories in Kentucky, Missouri, and elsewhere, purchased by the Mississippi, though purchased, of the dearest blood of the West, will leave it still in full vigor, in a more contracted field perhaps—though even that is doubtful, but more concentrated and undiminished strength. This rebellion must be essentially crushed, if at all, quickly; and it must receive its deathblow in Virginia, where the military strength of its upholders is chiefly concentrated. It must be broken down by the capture, or by the irresistible defeat of the rebel army of Minnesota."

About this time Admiral Foote reported from Island No. 10 that the rebels had, on the Mississippi, thirteen gun-boats, eight of which could be used as rams, and still others building. The Navy Department, impressed by its Herculean task to blockade a coast over three thousand miles in length, had built no boats to meet these rebel rams. The navy complained of want of authority for this service. The gun-boats, which were then upon the Mississippi had been ordered by the War Department through the foresight of General Fremont. In this dilemma, Secretary Stanton, with his characteristic boldness, assumed the responsibility and sent Mr. Ellet to the West to purchase and convert into rams such vessels as he deemed best suited for the purpose.

Accordingly, with a Colonel's commission in his pocket, he set out upon this mission on the 26th of March. The Boards of Trade in the cities of Pittsburg, Cincinnati, New Albany, and St. Louis were requested, by telegraph, to assist him. At Pittsburg he purchased five powerful tow-boats, the Lioness, Samson, Mango, Fulton, and Homer. The hulls were strengthened, the bows filled with solid timber, the boilers protected by a double tier of oak 24 inches thick, and the pilot-house plated against musketry. At Cincinnati he purchased four side-wheelers, one of great power, as being more readily handled in the strong current of the Mississippi—the Queen of the West, Monarch, Switzerland, and Lancaster. The alterations were pushed as rapidly as possible, but there still remained the most important part of the expedition to be supplied—the crew.

The navy looked askance at the innovation, and the river craftsmen saw all sorts of obstacles in the way. It was difficult to get either pilots, engineers, crews, or sharp-shooters. Colonel Ellet here threw the whole force of his fascinating influence into the work. He had full confidence in the success of his enterprise, and won his way to the hearts of all whom he approached. He sent for his brother, and received permission to recruit from the army for this dangerous service as it was popularly esteemed.

His brother, Alfred W. Ellet, then a Captain in the Fifty-ninth Illinois, brought his own company, with another from the Sixty-third Illinois, and met the boats at Cairo. Pilots and engineers were still hard to be obtained; but by dint of his wonderful persuasive eloquence he succeeded in convincing those around him that the service was not so perilous as was commonly supposed. For firemen he was mainly indebted to negroes.

While he was thus employed the rebel flotilla at Fort Pillow attacked our fleet of ironclads on the 10th of May, and, although the enemy suffered from shot, two of our gunboats, the Cincinnati and the Mound City, were sunk by the rebel rams. There was the greatest fear lest they might renew the attack and sink the remainder of our fleet, and thus destroy our ascendency on the Mississippi. At this juncture Alfred Ellet was sent down with the five stern-wheelers and such crews as he could collect. Their appearance at Fort Pillow, although calculated to give little comfort to our fleet, so frail and worthless did they look, had the happiest effect upon the rebels, who telegraphed their arrival as something formidable. By a display of strength the point was gained. The rebel boat did not venture to attack and soon after began the evacuation.

A few days later the Colonel, with the side-wheel boats, arrived and made several demonstrations in order to drill his men, and to inspire his fleet with confidence. He begged of Commander Davis, to whose orders he was subject, for permission to run by the fort and engage the hostile fleet below, if he could only be accompanied by a couple of gun-boats; for it must be understood the rams had not a gun on board at this time larger than a musket. They were painted black so as to make them look as formidable as possible. Each boat was provided with twenty sharp-shooters, who fired from loop-holes. The Queen of the West was Colonel Ellet's flag-ship. The Monarch was commanded by Alfred Ellet. The pilot of the Queen of the West, named Collins, volunteered for this service, and heroically discharged the responsibilities which devolved upon him.

On the 5th of June the enemy burned his camp preparatory to evacuation. During the night Alfred W. Ellet floated down in a yawl...
to a point opposite the fort, and with the first
dawn of light raised the Stars and Stripes over
the abandoned works. That night the gun-
boats were tied to the shore three miles above
Memphis. The rams having been detained
were twenty miles further up the river. Be-
fore daylight, however, they were steaming
down the river, and at half past four overtook
the gun-boat fleet drawn out in line of battle
above the city. The rebel gun-boats and rams
were hidden by a bend in the river below.
Colonel Ellet, suspecting that an engagement
might take place, although he had received no
notification from Commander Davis, had hur-
rried down, and was rounding into the shore
when the first shot was fired by the rebels.
At this he gave orders to steam out, and as
his vessel turned her head down stream, stand-
ing on the open deck with his arm stretched
toward the cannonading, he shouted across to
his brother of the Monarch just behind him,
"Follow me and attack the enemy."
His great concern was now to infuse confi-
dence into the hearts of his crew, some of
whom had shown signs of demoralization.
Animated by the inspiration of the sublime
moment he ordered his engineer to put on all
steam, and the majestic ship with great rapidity
rushed down the channel. Eighty, ninety, one
hundred pounds pressure was successfully re-
ported. Dashing outside the line of gun-boats
so as to get at once a clear view of the enemy,
and a fair sweep against them, he shot past the
iron-clads and plunged upon the nearest hostile
craft, which proved to be the General Lovell,
a New Orleans tow-boat fitted as a gun-boat
and ram. The crash was tremendous. The
Queen's chimneys reeled and shook; the upper
works of both boats were rattled, and for a
moment it seemed as if they both go
down together. The result was, however, pre-
cisely what Colonel Ellet had calculated. In
five minutes the Lovell had sunk with the loss
of the greater part of her crew, while Colonel
Ellet's own vessel was comparatively uninjured.

Before the Queen, arrested by the shock,
could regain her headway she was attacked by
two of the rebel rams, the Bragg and Price.
The former made a lunge at the Queen strik-
ing her in the wheel-house; but the blow not
being fairly aimed did not seriously injure the
Queen, disabling one wheel only. The Bragg,
then glancing off, ran afloat with her consort the
Price, stripping her wheel completely from her
side. The wounded steamer makes for the
Arkansas shore, and, careening, sinks nearly
out of sight. While these scenes were trans-
piring a brisk fire was being kept-up by the
sharp-shooters and the cannon on both sides.
Colonel Ellet stepped out upon the forward
part of the deck to observe the effect of the
blow upon the Lovell, when he received a pis-
tol-ball in the knee from one of the rebel boats
which disabled him.

At this instant down came the Monarch and
rushed into the Beauraegard. Although the

blow was well parried the rebel ram was so
badly pierced as to sink in a few minutes.
The gun-boats had by this time come to close
quarters, and were pouring in shot and shell in
 incessant discharges. The gallant onset of the
rams, however, broke the rebel spirit for serious
resistance. Four of their vessels had been sunk
or disabled in twenty minutes, and the rest were
everding to escape. "Save himself who
can" was now the word.

The Jeff Thompson, completely riddled by
shot, ran upon the Arkansas shore, where she
was blown up. All who were not wounded
escaped to the woods pursued by our exploding
shells. The Sumter, raked fore and aft and
abandoned by the crew, was deserted. The
Little Rebel, the flag-ship, crippled by shot
and pursued by a ram, plunged upon the shore
when Commodore Montgomery and the crew
leaped over her sides and made for the timber.
In the general conflagration three of the rebel
rams ran into each other, and our gun-boats
poured into them our entangled, broadside
after broadside completely riddling their hulls
and upper works. The Van Dorn turned upon
her heel and fled, panic-stricken, down the
river. The Monarch and Lancaster followed
her in hot pursuit.

Never was victory more prompt or decisive.
In twenty minutes the fate of the rebel fleet
was settled. In one short hour every vessel
of that fleet but one was either sunk, burned,
blown up, or captured. All the naval preten-
sions of the rebels on the Mississippi were, by
this sharp, short conflict dissipated. While
the action was in progress the bluffs of the city
of Memphis were lined with spectators, many
of whom had been invited by the rebel Com-
modore Montgomery to witness the sinking of
the whole Yankee fleet. Their surprise and
chagrin at the sudden and unexpected turn of
affairs was equaled only by their admiration of
the intrepid manner in which the Union rams
had plunged into the fray.

Colonel Ellet was disabled by a bullet-shot
into his knee. Very singularly he was the
only man on board the ram-boat who was in-
jured. Not one of our gun-boats received any
serious harm. The wreck of the rebel fleet
was terrible. The explosion of the magazine
in one of the boats scattered fragments to the
distance of a mile. We took nearly one hun-
dred prisoners, and about one hundred and
fifty wounded by shot, drowning, or the flame.
As Fleet Captain Davis was pursuing the Van
Dorn in the Benton, Colonel Ellet sent his son
and nephew with a small party on shore to de-
mand the surrender of the city. Having de-
livered the message the two young cousins
Charles and Edward Ellet, proceeded to the
Post-office, followed by a mob, who fastened
the doors upon them when they ascended to
hoist the national banner in place of the rebel
flag. After the delay of a couple of hours they
rejoined the fleet.

Meanwhile a deputation of citizens had cros-
ed to the Colonel's flag-boat. While this conference was going on, Fleet Captain Davis returned in the Benton, the Van Dorn having escaped, and, in virtue of his rank, commenced the negotiations anew. In his official report, Commander Davis gives the following account of the action, which, though not entirely agreeing with the account of other observers, is, in all essentials, correct. It is natural that there should have been a little rivalry and some jealousies between the ram and gun-boat fleet:

"While the engagement," writes Commander Davis, "was going on in this manner, two vessels of the ram-fleet, under command of Colonel Ellet, steamed rapidly by us and ran boldly into the enemy's line. Several conflicts had taken place between the rams before the flotilla of gun-boats led by the Benton, moving at a slower rate, could arrive at the closest quarters. In the mean time, however, the firing from the gun-boats was continuous and exceedingly well directed. The General Beauregard and the Little Rebel were struck in the boilers and blown up.

"The ram, Queen of the West, which Colonel Ellet commanded, was, in person, encountered with full power the rebel steamer General Lovell and sunk her, but in so doing sustained pretty serious damage. Up to this time the rebel fleet had maintained its position and used its guns with great spirit. These disasters compelled the remaining vessels to resort to their superior speed as the only means of safety. A running fight took place which lasted nearly an hour, and carried us ten miles below the city. The attack made by the two rams under Colonel Ellet, which took place before the flotilla closed in with the enemy, was bold and successful."

The damage to the Queen, as we have stated, was in consequence of a side blow from one of the enemy's rams and not from her shock with the Lovell. The wound in Colonel Ellet's knee proved upon examination to be of the class called dangerous but not necessarily fatal. The ball had lodged in the bones of the joint. Inflammation set in, amputation he stoutly resisted, declaring "the life should go first." His delicate and highly nervous frame sunk under the pain, which grew intense. He still persisted in attending to his duties, and making the necessary preparations for moving down to Vicksburg. His family arrived; he grew worse in spite of their care, nor would he consent that one of the boats of his fleet should be detached to convey him home.

On the 19th of June he bade adieu to his brother Alfred, upon whom the command now devolved, and who was on the point of starting down the unexplored river. His parting salutation on this occasion bore the same fervor and the prevailing idea of his life. "Alfred, stand to your post." Colonel Ellet was conveyed to Cairo on the Switzerland, and expired in great peace and serenity of mind on reaching the wharf on the morning of the 21st. His remains were conveyed to Philadelphia, where they were buried with conspicious honors. This stroke of affliction proved too great for his sorrowing wife, whose broken heart kept feebly beating until she had followed her earthly hopes to the grave, and then soon after rested with him forever.

The brief yet glorious career of their son, the reader. Charles was born in Georgetown, District of Columbia, 1848. His precocity of intellect and highly sensitive nature made him alike the cause of pride and of anxiety to his parents. In 1855 he accompanied his father to Europe and remained two years in one of the schools of Paris. At the outbreak of the war he was scarcely eighteen years of age. He was at that time engaged in reading medicine, and had attended his first lecture, when the terrible battle of Bull Run filled the streets and houses of Georgetown with our wounded soldiers. Charles immediately volunteered as nurse or assistant surgeon, and devoted himself many weeks untriringly to the care of the wounded.

Soon after, learning that his father was projecting the enterprise of steam rams on the Mississippi, he hastened to the West, and reached Cairo just as the first and rudest of them was to be sent down the river. The young but zealous patriot was assigned to duty as a medical cadet. At the naval battle which we have described, at Memphis, he was on board the Switzerland, and came up to the assistance of the disabled Queen, and was soon after sent on shore as we have related by his wounded father, to bear a letter demanding of the authorities the surrender of the city.

On the 20th of June Alfred Ellet, summoned by those patriotic calls of duty which are more imperious than even fraternal love, commenced the movement of the little fleet down the river toward Vicksburg. Charles, struggling between the fond love of a dying father and the calls of an imperilled country, followed his uncle. Four hundred miles of unknown stream extended between them and the bluffs of Vicksburg. In those distant waters, far removed from all facilities for naval architecture and supplies, obstacles were encountered by the gun-boat fleet which few can comprehend.
Admiral Foote stated to the writer that the struggle to get his boats ready for the conflict was vastly greater than that which he encountered in the hour of battle. The gun-boats encountered many of the hindrances inevitable in great enterprises. It was known that Admiral Farragut was ascending the river from New Orleans. Therefore, without waiting for the gun-boat fleet, Alfred Ellet started with his rams alone, without a gun larger than a musket, and with no armor which could resist a 32-pound shot.

When they arrived at the mouth of the Yazoo, just above Vicksburg, on the 24th, they learned from one of the inhabitants that Admiral, then Commodore, Farragut's fleet was anchored just below the batteries. The next day young Charles was commissioned to convey a letter from Commodore Davis to Farragut. It was an enterprise demanding both sagacity and courage. Making his way through the deep stagnant swamps, on the western banks of the Mississippi opposite Vicksburg, at times dodging the rebel pickets by rushing into the water, where the myriads of mosquitoes were hardly less deadly than hostile bullets, he spent the whole night in getting across the isthmus which the river there forms, and the next morning as he stood half buried in fog and brushwood on the shore he fired a pistol, and thus called the attention of the Hartford which was out in the river. A boat was sent ashore, moving cautiously in fear of an ambuscade, and took him and the few accompanying him on board.

After a thorough cross-examination, through fear that he might prove but a rebel spy, our hero was sent back with special dispatches under an escort of one hundred marines. Through the communication thus opened an agreement was made that Lieutenant-Colonel Alfred Ellet was to guard with his rams the upper part of the river and the mouth of the Yazoo against any raid from rebel craft. In the mean time Alfred Ellet had steamed up the Yazoo in the Monarch in pursuit of several rebel transports and unfinished gun-boats. Charles Ellet followed him up the Yazoo in the Lancaster. They ascended the river sixty-five miles to Liverpool Landing, where they found a raft or boom constructed across the narrow and tortuous stream supported by a battery. As soon as the rebels caught sight of the two black rams, steaming so vigorously up the stream, unaware that they had not a single cannon on board, they set fire to three of their gun-boats, the Van Dorn, the Livingston, and Lady Polk.

At that time there were less than twenty guns mounted at Vicksburg, and none on the Yazoo near the city. Communication with the lower fleet was continually kept up until the 25th, when Commodore Farragut, in whose character the most chivalric bravery was blended with the most consummate prudence, apprehensive that the little force of unarmed rams might be overpowered, made his first passage of the batteries in the Hartford with the Richmond and six other gun-boats, not, however, without serious loss of life. The heroic achievement rang through the land exciting enthusiasm in all patriot hearts. Then followed the
first weary siege of Vicksburg under the combined fleets of Farragut and Davis and the land-forces of General Williams. Two reconnaissances were made up the Yazoo to learn something of the condition of the iron-plated ram Arkansas then completing.

On the 10th of July Charles Ellet received the melancholy intelligence of the death of both father and mother, and of the prostration of his beloved and only sister. These griefs compelled him to leave the stormy scenes of war for a time and hasten up the river. Those who were with Charles Ellet in those sad hours remember well how manfully and yet how sorrowfully he bore up against this stroke, and yet how he regretted to withdraw from the front of the enemy. Four days after this the Queen of the West and the Tyler which had been sent up the Yazoo encountered the new rebel ram Arkansas, heavily plated and with a formidable battery. After a running fight of an hour, during which the Tyler and the Carondelet were very severely handled by the rebel ram, the rebel ram through the whole fleet, exploding the boiler of the Switzeland and doing other damage to various vessels of the Union squadron, and took refuge beneath the guns of the Vicksburg batteries. "Her appearance," says Commander Davis, "was so sudden and the steam of almost every vessel in the squadron so low, or, in other words, so entirely unprepared were we, that she had an opportunity to pass without positive obstruction, though she was severely injured by shot."

The consternation that was produced in the fleet that day is indescribable. Nothing was known of the injuries which the rebel ram had received, and by the force of imagination and mystery it seemed as if the enemy had really produced a boat impervious to the heaviest batteries, and one which would prove a deadly antagonist. Anxious was the little black craft watched as she lay at the wharf all day. The next day, when she steamed up around the point as to be visible to our fleet, quite a panic was created. There was a general fear that the monster might come up and sink the whole fleet of thirty vessels at her leisure. A consultation was held. Something must be done to revive the waning courage of the patriot crews, and to get rid if possible of the foe.

Colonel Alfred Ellet volunteered to go down in the ram Queen of the West, accompanied by the Essex, and attack the Arkansas at the wharf. Every day the rebels were strengthening their batteries. On the 23rd of July, at the dawn of day the expedition started. At first the Essex led followed by the Benton. Soon the ram Queen of the West came rushing by the other two steamers to plunge with all her speed into the Arkansas. As she passed the Benton the Commodore stood upon the deck and waving his hand, shouted out his kindly wishes in the words, "Good luck! good luck!" Unfortunately these words of cheer were understood to be a command, "Go back! go back!"

In reluctant obedience to the supposed command, just as the ram was entering the fiery ordeal she was rounded to, when the explanation was made. In such enterprises moments are invaluable. It was now quite light. The rebels opened their batteries and poured in a fearful storm of shot and shell upon the doomed Queen. In the midst of this terrific fire Colonel Alfred Ellet, with Lieutenant Hunter as his second in command, anxious to redeem the disastrous mistake, again brought the ram into position and plunged forward at the top of his speed, aiming at the beam of the rebel craft.

In consequence, however, of the strong eddies under the bluff, and the impossibility of calculating the proper momentum of the ram, the blow was not quite fair, and instead of crushing in the side of the Arkansas only damaged the shaft of her engine. The injury, however, which the ram received was quite severe. The Essex was in the mean time doing good service, plunging several very effective shots into the Arkansas. Commodore Porter, in his report to Flag Officer Davis, says:

"Permit me to draw your attention to Master Willie Carre, of only fourteen years of age. This young gentleman volunteered to act as my aid. His conduct was throughout the action marked with great coolness and bravery."

All the while fifty rebel guns in battery were pouring forth a storm of shot and shell. The Queen of the West, which, by her own velocity and the swift current of the river, had been carried far down the stream, was now compelled, while exposed to the deadly fire, to struggle slowly and laboriously up against the strong current of the stream. Round shot plowed through her furnaces, over and under her boilers, and made a complete wreck of her upper works. Yet strange to say, of her two officers, four soldiers, and three negro firemen, all of whom were volunteers, not one was injured. Those who witnessed the scene were overawed with the amazing temerity of the actors.

In August sickness made such ravages in the fleet and among the land-troops that the siege of Vicksburg was abandoned. The lower fleet passed down by the batteries to New Orleans, and the gun-boats returned to Helena. It was during this interval that the Benton, with the rams Monarch, Lancaster, and others, captured the rebel steamer Fair Play, at Milliken's Bend, with a cargo of five thousand muskets, and equipments and ammunition, en route for the Trans-Mississippi army. This was about the 20th of August. The gun-boats Benton and Mound City, with three of Colonel Ellet's rams, left the rest of the fleet for a trip up the Yazoo River, hoping to destroy some transports which they had learned were there. They soon came to a band of rebels erecting a battery on a bluff which commanded the stream. After a short but brisk conflict the rebels ran, and boats were sent on shore which captured and destroyed the battery. Two 42-pounders, two 32-pounders, one 20-pound howitzer, and a brass 12-
pound Mexican gun, and a large amount of ammunition were taken.

On the 1st of November following the Marine Brigade was ordered to be raised for the purpose of keeping open the river, the last of the existing rebel boats having been destroyed near Baton Rouge. On the 6th Charles Rivers Ellet was made Colonel, and placed in command of the ram so proper, while his uncle Alfred, as General, took the Marine Brigade. General Ellet commenced at once the reconnaissance of Yazoo River as the key to Vicksburg. In this service he had been fighting sharp-shooters and fishing up torpedoes when General Sherman made his desperate but unsuccessful attack upon the rebel strong-hold at Chickasaw Bluffs. General Grant; betrayed by the ineptitude or treachery of a subordinate officer, had been unable to reach him for co-operation by a march through the heart of Mississippi.

On the 20th of December General Sherman, in conference with Admiral Porter, determined to try to force the passage of Yazoo River at Haines Bluff. The bluff bristled with heavy siege-guns, and the river was obstructed by a strong raft of timber. In these arduous enterprises of the river fleet deeds were performed almost every hour meriting particular recital. Admiral Porter, speaking of these scenes, says truly in his report: "The operations of the navy in the Yazoo are worthy to be ranked among the brightest events of the war. The officers in charge of getting up the torpedoes and clearing eight miles of the river distinguished themselves by their patient endurance and cool courage under a galling fire of musketry from well protected and unseen riflemen, and the crews of the boats exhibited a courage and coolness seldom equaled. The navy will scarcely ever get credit for these events. They are not brilliant enough to satisfy our impatient people at the North, who know little of the difficulties attending an expedition like the one mentioned, or how much officers and men are exposing themselves, while they wonder why we do not demolish mountains of granite."

The gallant young Colonel with all a young man's glowing ambition and zeal had, perhaps rather importantly, urged upon the Admiral to give him something to do. Perhaps a little necrophilia by this parted kin, or possibly wishing to test the mettle of the enthusiastic volunteer, the Admiral selected him to lead the way up to the towering batteries on the bluff, and to blow up the raft. Fitting a torpedo raft or devil, as it was called, of his own invention to the ram Liones, young Ellet made all ready, and at 10 o'clock waited on the Admiral to say that he had two tons of powder on the bow of his boat and to ask how he was to proceed. He was informed that he was to steam directly to the raft, which was within fifty feet of the huge guns upon Drangold's Bluff, and force the raft, if possible, by blowing it up with his torpedoes. The dauntless young fellow asked,

"Don't you expect the enemy will be firing into my large powder all this while?"

"Oh yes," said the impetuous sailor, "but you must not mind bullets or shells, you know!"

"Admiral," was the reply, "I am not afraid of them; but I wish to know how you expected the thing was to be done."

Admiral Porter thus describes the result:

"Ten thousand men were to have been thrown right at the foot of the cliff, striking the face of the transport, while all the iron-clads were to open fire on the batteries and try and silence them temporarily. The ram Liones, under Colonel Ellet, was fitted with an apparatus for breaking torpedo-wires, and was to go ahead and clear the way. Colonel Ellet was also provided with fifteen torpedoes to blow up the raft and enable the vessels to get by if possible. This desperate duty he took upon himself cheerfully, and no doubt would have performed it well if the opportunity occurred. The details of the expedition were left to me, and it was all ready to start at $3,30$ A.M. A strong fog unfortunately set in at midnight and lasted until morning, when it was too late to start. It was so thick that vessels could not move. We could not see each other at ten paces. The river was too narrow for operations in clear weather, much less in a fog. After the fog there was no indication whatever of a long and heavy rain.

In the report which the Admiral made two days after, he says: "On the night of the 31st of December, when it was intended to assault the batteries by land and water, Colonel Ellet took upon himself the perilous duty of running up in the Liones, in face of the batteries, to clear out the torpedoes or break the wires, and to plant torpedoes on the raft which had batteries at each end of it. No doubt he would have performed it or lost his life and his vessel. I have great esteem in the commander of the ram and those under him, and take this opportunity to state to the department how highly I appreciate the commander and his associates."

In the spring of 1863 General Grant assumed command of the armies operating before Vicksburg. The history of those eventful days, whose incidents of endurance and heroism can scarce find a parallel in the pages of romance, can not here be narrated. Upon the withdrawal of our forces before the arrival of General Grant the rebels had brought out from the Yazoo into the Mississippi one of their large river boats, the City of Vicksburg, which lay at the wharf piled up with cotton bales, and which they were evidently preparing for some form of detention or destruction. On the 1st of February Admiral Porter ordered Colonel Ellet to pass down by the batteries, and if possible destroy the steamer at the wharf. The next morning, at day-light, as he steamed down the river in the Queen of the West, the rebels opened a very heavy fire upon him from their augmented batteries. The rebels had moored their steamer in such a position that it was impossible to strike her fairly. One of the guns of the Queen, for the rafts were now armed, was shotted with what were called turpentine balls, so as to set fire to the rebel craft. In the short, sharp conflict which ensued both steamers were set on fire. The
flames, however, were in both cases extinguished. On board the Queen of the West they were compelled to cut loose the flaming cotton bales while assailed by a murderous fire from the rebel batteries.

Immediately after this Colonel Ellet was sent down the Mississippi to the mouth of Red River, where the rebel transports were busy conveying supplies to Port Hudson. In a short cruise of three days Colonel Ellet captured and destroyed three large steamers loaded with stores, and valued at not less than $400,000, besides destroying large amounts of army stores at Vidalia and other points. Wherever he appeared he struck terror into the foe. On the 10th the Queen started on another cruise to the Red River accompanied by a little ferry-boat, the De Soto. Of the party on board there were the correspondents of the New York Herald, Mr. Finlay Anderson; of the Chicago Tribune, Mr. Boardman; and of the Cincinnati Commercial, Mr. McCul- lough. The two steamers swept vengefully along, destroying whatever could be of use to the enemy. On the 10th they ascended the Red River as far as Atchafalaya, destroying a large amount of provisions.

Learning that there was a small battery of 32-pounders some thirty miles farther up the city at Gordon’s Landing, now Fort De Russey, and that there were three steamers lying there, he pushed boldly up the river for their capture. Just before dusk the point was made. The rebel steamers had evidently got news of their approach, and were hurrying up their fires. As they rounded an abrupt point in the stream the fort opened fire upon them with four 33-pounders. These guns were in fine position, and their range was so effective that Colonel Ellet ordered the pilot to back the Queen out. By floating down 60 yards they would be out of all danger. But the pilot, in the attempt to withdraw, ran the steamer aground on the right-hand shore.

The situation of the unfortunate Queen was now desperate. Nearly every shot from the enemy’s batteries struck the boat. A 28-pound ball pierced the steam-pipe. Instantly the bulwarks and the cabin were filled with the suffocating and scalding vapor. The yawl had disappeared. The scene which ensued can not be better described than by the pen of the correspondent of the Chicago Tribune, who shared in all the perils of the awful scene which he so graphically delineates:

“Shot were flying; shell were bursting; and, worse
than all, we could not reply. The enemy had our exact range, and every explosion told with fearful effect. Your correspondent sought the pilot-house, and thus became an unwilling witness of the terrible affair. Three huge 32-pounder shells exploded on the deck, not twenty feet from our heads.

"The air was filled with fragments and exploding shells, which flew before, behind, and all about us. Soon we heard a crash among the machinery below. Word was passed up that the lever which regulates the engine was shot away. Another crash, and we learned the escape-pipe was gone. Still another, and the steam-chest was fractured. The whole boat shook with the rush of the escaping steam, which penetrated every nook and cranny. The engine-room was crowded with engineers, firemen, negroes, and prisoners, who had sought that place under the impression that it was the safest. All this time while we supposed we were blown up, and were looking every moment to be launched into eternity, the batteries played upon the unfortunate vessel, and pierced her through and through. Men crowded to the after-part of the vessel. Some tumbled cotton bales into the river, and, getting astride of them, sought to reach the De Soto, a mile below. The yawl was tied to the stern, and a man stood there with a loaded pistol threatening to shoot the first one who entered it. The cry was raised for Colonel Eliet and Mr. McCullough of the Commercial.

"The yawl had reached the boat and was busily engaged in picking up the crew, when three boat-loads of Confederate soldiers cautiously approached the vessel and boarded her. Of course there was no resistance, and our boys became their prisoners.

"The De Soto hearing several men shout from the shore, "Surrender," was allowed to float down stream, picking up, as she floated, several who had escaped on cotton bales. When she reached a point ten miles below, the yawl overtook her with others who had been similarly preserved."}

Charles Eliet was ever of the opinion that he was betrayed by his pilot. But those familiar with the treacherous and tortuous navigation of that stream, especially at that point,
judge that the grounding was accidental. No one was killed on the Queen. An engineer, the surgeon, and Mr. Anderson were captured with the boat.

The chagrin and surprise of the rebels at the discovery of what a cheap extemporized craft had done them so much damage, and caused them such commotion and alarm, may be imagined. The secret was out. Why should they not strike terror also, and learn of their enemies? It was a great loss of prestige to us, and a great gain of information to them.

Charles made his way sorrowfully in the Era back to Vicksburg. He was not alone. He was not alone, for more than a hundred ships from field-batteries as he passed Ellis's Cliff, Panygra Island, and New Carthage. The announcement of the loss of the Queen caused deep concern at Vicksburg, both in the fleet and on the shore. Though many blamed Colonel Ellet for his rashness, all admitted that it was a failing which seemed to virtue's side. The rebels speedily repaired the Queen, and advanced with her to attack our fleet.

The following extracts from a letter written by Rear-Admiral Porter, from the Yazoo River, on the 26th of February, 1862, in reference to the scenes we are now describing, will be read with interest. The reader will perhaps see indications in it of the rivalry between the ram-boat and the gun-boats:

"We are all in quite a state of excitement here in consequence of the appearance of the ram Queen of the West at Warrenton, seven miles below Vicksburg, with the rebel flag flying. We discovered this interesting event in a brisk morning with steam up ready for a start. The account I received from Commodore Ellet led me to believe that she was in such a condition that she could not be repaired for some time. You may judge of my surprise, then, when told she was near Vicksburg. I always thought that the ram crew could not play without any necessity; and now I am pretty well convinced of it. At all events they spoiled a very important excursion—holding up the Mississippi River between Vicksburg and Port Hudson, and cutting off all supplies.

"The rebels had only one vessel on the whole river; that was the Webb, a war-worn, leaky vessel, and not in any way to be feared; hence we should have had all things our own way. There were on the way and just Vicksburg twelve good guns, such as they have not got in all the river—at least in this part of it, and river vessels. One, it is true, was an old ferry-boat that we had captured; but she had a gun on, and would have answered to protect the coal barges, while the other two were tied together. Well, all that was knocked in the bow by the ram getting adrift under a battery.

"The prize New Era and the persons who remained were only saved from capture by meeting the Indiana, which vessel made the Webb turn back, and she (the Webb) escaped up Red River. I know that Brown would have taken care of the Webb by himself; but I have no idea that he will be a match for the Queen and the Webb both running at the same time. The Indiana is a week vessel, and the only good thing about her is her battery."

The Indiana, as has been mentioned, had been sent down past the batteries at Vicksburg by Admiral Porter, under the command of Lieutenant-Commander George Brown, to the aid of Colonel Ellet. On the 15th of February, when grooping her way slowly along through a dense fog, she met Colonel Ellet ascending the river in the Era, about ten miles below Natchez. Here he first learned of the loss of the Queen of the West.

On consultation with Colonel Ellet, Commander Brown decided to continue down the stream as far as the mouth of Red River with both of the boats. As they were nearing Ellis's Cliff the Em, which was leading, signaled her consort that there was danger ahead. Almost immediately the rebel steamer Webb appeared. But the Webb was not disposed for battle against such odds. She turned upon her heel, and, rushing down the stream, speedily disappeared in the river fog, which was so dense as to render a vigorous chase impossible. The Indianaola threw two 11-inch shots at the retreating steamer, but they both fell short.

The two patriot boats then continued down the Mississippi until they reached the mouth of Red River on the 17th, where the Indianaola maintained a rigid blockade until the 21st. As they could obtain no Red River pilot, it was not safe to venture up the stream. As the Em was unarmed, and had several prisoners on board, it was decided for Colonel Ellet to ascend the river with that boat to Vicksburg to communicate with the squadron there. After the lapse of a few days Commander Brown learned that the rebels had repaired the Queen of the West, and would soon be ready with that powerful ram, aided by the Webb and four cotton-clad boats, to attack the Indianaola. This rendered it necessary immediately to communicate with the squadron above. As no boat had been sent down to Commander Brown's assistance, he feared that Colonel Ellet had not reached the fleet. He had reached the squadron, and earnestly begged permission to take down one of the other rams to the assistance of the Indianaola. For doubting good reasons, but of which we are not informed, the permission was not granted.

As the Indianaola was slowly ascending the swift current of the Mississippi, delayed by her coal barges, which were alongside, on the 24th, about nine o'clock of a very dark night, four rebel steamers were discovered in chase. The Indianaola instantly prepared for action, and turned around to face its foes. The Queen first struck the Indianaola, inflicting no serious damage. Then came the Webb."

"Both vessels," reports Commander Brown, "came together bows on with a tremendous crash, which knocked nearly every one down on board of both vessels, doing no damage to us, while the Webb's bow was cut in at least eight feet. The engagement now became general, and at close quarters. The cotton-clads kept up a heavy fire with field-pieces and small-arms; but Commander Brown devoted all his attention to the rams, as they were the only antagonists he feared. The battery of the Indianaola was but little avail, since the night was so dark as to render accuracy of aim impossible. Five times the rebel rams struck the Indianaola, but each time at such an angle that no vital injury was inflicted."
The sixth blow was from the Webb. It crushed in the starboard wheel, disabled one of the rudders, and started several leaks. Again the Webb struck a seventh blow upon her sorely-wounded antagonist, fair upon the stern, crushing in the timbers, and pouring in floods of water. The wound was so severe as to disable the ship from any further efficient action. Her gallant commander, as she was fast sinking, ran her ashore, and surrendered the steamer, not with dishonor, shattered and water-logged, to four vessels mounting ten guns and manned by over a thousand men. This disaster occurred about thirty-five miles below Vicksburg.

The rebels speedily commenced repairing the Indiana, intending, with that splendid steamer added to the Queen of the West, to enter upon a brilliant career of river victories. The final destruction of the Indiana was one of the most ludicrous events of the war. Admiral Porter thus describes his share of the adventure:

"If I had a vessel with an iron Monitor—why could I not save it with a wooden one? An old canal barge, picked up in the river, was the foundation to build on. It was built of old boards in twelve hours, with pork barrels on top of each other for smoke-stacks, and two old canoes for quarter boats. The furnaces were built of mud, and only intended to make black smoke, and not steam.

"With a knowledge that Brown was in peril, I let loose our Monitor. When it was deserted by the dim light of the moon never did the batteries of Vicksburg open with such a din. The earth fairly trembled, and the shot flew thick around the devoted Monitor. But she ran safely past all the batteries, though under fire for an hour, and drifted down to the lower mouth of the canal. She was a much better looking vessel than the Indiana.

"When the vessels were ready to open upon her again with all the guns they could bring to bear, without a shot hitting her to do any harm, because they did not make her settle in the water, though going in at one side and out at the other. She was already full of water. The soldiers of our army shouted and laughed like mad."

Information of the approach of the terrible turreted Monitor, which, unharmed, had floated past all the batteries, was sent by the rebels to the Queen of the West and the Indiana, which were lying under the batteries of Vicksburg, eight miles below Vicksburg. The Queen of the West instantly got up all steam, and rushed as fast as her engines could drive her down the river, while the sham Monitor drifted past the forts and batteries of Warrenton, impelled only by the five-knot current. The Indiana was undergoing repairs near where she was taken. The authorities at Vicksburg, apprehensive that the steamer might be captured by the mud-scow in disguise, dispatched an order for the Indiana to be instantly blown up. The train was fired, the magazine exploded, and the steamer was scattered in fragments.
The chagrin of the rebels when they heard of the hoax which had been played upon them was indescribable. The Richmond Examiner of March 7 thus speaks of the occurrence:

"The reported fate of the Indiana is even more disgraceful than farcical. Here was perhaps the finest iron-clad in the Western waters, captured after a herculean struggle, rapidly repaired, and destined to join the Queen of the West in a series of victories. Next we hear that she was of necessity blown up, in the true Merrimac-Mailory style; and why? Laugh and hold your sides lest ye die of a surfeit of derision, O Yankee! Blown up because forsooth a flat-boat or mud-scow, with a small house taken from the back garden of a plantation just on top of it, floated down the river before the frightened eyes of the partisan rangers. A Turreted Monster!

"A most unfortunate and unnecessary affair," says the dispatch. Rather so! The turreted monster proves to be started to run past the batteries at Vicksburg. They were assailed by a storm of shells hurled in a hundred circling lines around them. When directly in front of the city the Lancaster was struck by a heavy shot crashing through her hull, and the Switzerland had her boilers pierced by two shots, instantly enveloping the whole ship in scalding steam. Lieutenant-Colonel Ellet, after he had seen all the crew in the boats, fired his pistol into the cotton bales, so as to make sure of the destruction of the ship, and then rowed to his crippled consort.

The Switzerland escaped, and with boilers repaired, did valiant patrol and dispatch duty between the armies of General Grant and General Banks until the fall of Vicksburg and Port
Hudson, which freed the great river from the foul banner of rebellion forever.

With the close of the hot summer, and also with the substantial close of his labors, which had for months taxed his mental and physical energies to the utmost, Charles R. Ellet applied for leave of absence, and in August retired to the home of his uncle, Dr. Ellet, at Bunker Hill, Illinois. A severe facial neuralgia had long troubled him, for which he was in the habit of taking some opiate. On the night of the 16th of October he complained of not feeling well, and said to his aunt before retiring that he would take something "for the pain in his face." Undoubtedly the ingredient was morphia, as he had frequently administered it before, preparing it himself. Whether from an over-dose, or from some weakness of the system, morning found him cold, and the soul gone from its earthly casket.

He was but twenty years and five months old, and though so young had passed through perils and borne responsibilities such as few experience in a long lifetime. With remarkable acuteness and activity of intellect he read and discussed with avidity the philosophical works of Comte, Buckle, Mill, and Cousin. His conversation, tone, and manners were gentle, almost womanly. His massive brow, large, lustrous eyes, and long, straight black hair and expressive features ever attracted the attention of the observing. No reward awaits him on earth; but the love of friends and the veneration of his countrymen will enshrine his memory. In all the records of romance a more truly chivalric spirit can nowhere be found.

INdian Summer.

AN autumn sun, a golden haze,

In a calm radiance shining;

A meadow, stretching broad and green,
And on its breast in silver sheen

A ribbon streamlet twining,

Swift rushing from its mountain sources
It leaps the downward rocky course,
In haste to leave the shadow.

It winds the valleys, dimly seen,
It threads the mountain's wild ravine,
And drops into the meadow.

So softly taken to its breast
What wonder that it loves the rest,
Its ocean home forgetting?

With dreamy murmurs creeps the tide,
And none who saw the spot could chide
Its lingering and regretting.

Nature lies quiet, with hushed breath:
That life most glorious in its death
Its hectic flush is showing:
A crimson tint on wood and hill,
A golden light, and all so still,
So wondrous in its glowing.

In brighter robes than those of May
The fair Year burns her life away,
As if, for Summer mourning,
Like Eastern brides she sought the fire,
And perished grandly on his pyre,
Exulting in that burning.

Calm skies above, fair fields below:
The sunshineleeps, the waters flow
With effortless outgiving,
And with a thousand happy things,
My heart too flies at rest, and MAGs
The joy, the joy of living!