THE LEADERSHIP OF JOHN A. WINSLOW AND RAPHAEL SEMMES: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY

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The Leadership Requirements Model (LRM) provides a framework for evaluating the leadership of two 19th century naval commanders, John A. Winslow and Raphael Semmes, who engaged in battle off Cherbourg, France on 19 June 1864. Their vessels, the USS *Kearsarge* and the CSS *Alabama*, which were comparable in size, manning, guns, and speed, traded fire for over an hour. The historical analysis of this battle, as well as the careers of both naval officers, shows that both Winslow and Semmes demonstrated the attributes and competencies of the LRM. Their character, presence, and intellect formed the foundation of their leadership successes. Their warrior ethos and commitment fueled their intensity, while sound judgment guided their actions. Although they had different styles, they both showed presence. Both leaders earned the respect of their sailors and prepared their men for battle. Winslow and Semmes also showed resilience, learned from experiences, and achieved results. While both commanders committed temporary lapses in judgment, overall, their actions exemplify the LRM and provide valuable lessons for today's military leaders.

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

THE LEADERSHIP OF JOHN A. WINSLOW AND RAPHAEL SEMMES: A COMPARATIVE CASE STUDY, by LCDR Jeffrey W. Prickitt, 157 pages.

The Leadership Requirements Model (LRM) provides a framework for evaluating the leadership of two 19th century naval commanders, John A. Winslow and Raphael Semmes, who engaged in battle off Cherbourg, France on 19 June 1864. Their vessels, the USS *Kearsarge* and the CSS *Alabama*, which were comparable in size, manning, guns, and speed, traded fire for over an hour. The historical analysis of this battle, as well as the careers of both naval officers, shows that both Winslow and Semmes demonstrated the attributes and competencies of the LRM. Their character, presence, and intellect formed the foundation of their leadership successes. Their warrior ethos and commitment fueled their intensity, while sound judgment guided their actions. Although they had different styles, they both showed presence. Both leaders earned the respect of their sailors and prepared their men for battle. Winslow and Semmes also showed resilience, learned from experiences, and achieved results. While both commanders committed temporary lapses in judgment, overall, their actions exemplify the LRM and provide valuable lessons for today's military leaders.

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In my opinion he was the greatest admiral of the nineteenth century.[1]

-- German Emperor Wilhelm II, 1894, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*

He was the Christian gentleman.

-- Rear Admiral Raphael Semmes, *John Ancrum Winslow*

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PREFACE

After leaving the church, he made his way back to the harbor, found the small rowboat, and got in. It was about ten in the evening.[1] Returning to his ship, the Confederate captain climbed aboard. The two hundred and twenty-foot long oak vessel, constructed in the Laird yards of Liverpool two years before, floated at anchor in the port of Cherbourg, France.[2]

The next morning, the air brimmed with excitement. Crowds of people, in anticipation of a great battle, had flocked to the city and filled the hotels. Today would be the day, they had heard. It was Sunday morning. Gathering on the heights above the sea, fifteen thousand people awaited the forthcoming duel.[3] Containing all the elements of an epic sea battle, some spectators wagered on the outcome.[4] Two ships, comparable in size, armament, and crew, were about to engage in combat on the historic waters of the English Channel.

Exactly how similar were the ships? In displacement, 1031 tons versus 1016 tons; in speed, 10 knots versus 12 knots; in crew, 163 men versus 149 men; in guns, seven versus eight; and in engines, both had two.[5] The comparisons do not end there. Proven leaders commanded both vessels. The captains were experts in their fields, who, twenty years before, had both served the United States in the war with Mexico. Now, at this moment, in this war, they found themselves on opposing sides. Moreover, both men were passionate about their cause. In the words of naval officer and biographer John Ellicott, "It seems scarcely probable that two ships more equally matched will ever fight in single combat."[6]

In port, the commander of the Confederate ship, Captain Raphael Semmes, called "Old Beeswax" by his crew, prepared to fight. He filled his ship with coal to raise the waterline. He also drilled his men on boarding procedures.[7] Months earlier, he had written, "I have enjoyed life to a reasonable extent, and trust I shall have fortitude to meet with Christian calmness any fate that may be in store for me."[8]

Off the coast, in international waters, his foe waited. Several days had already passed and the captain of that Federal warship, not knowing if another day would come and go, commenced the weekly church services following morning inspection.[9]

In the harbor six miles away, the Confederate ship weighed anchor and began to move toward open waters. It was after nine.[10] After traveling seventy-five thousand miles, from England to the Azores, from the North Atlantic to the Caribbean, from Brazil to South Africa, and from Indonesia to France, the infamous warship would not end its journey in port. How could the *Alabama* finish without a fight?[11] Semmes, standing on a gun-carriage, addressed his crew, "The name of your ship has become a household word wherever civilization extends. Shall that name be tarnished by defeat?"[12]

"Never! Never!" the men shouted. The crew, mostly British enlisted men and Confederate officers, were ready for a fight.[13]

Off shore, the Federal warship was also ready. On deck, the crew had loaded every gun.[14] The lookouts, high at their posts, watched intently toward the shore. Holding a copy of the Bible, the captain, John Winslow, prepared to read aloud to his crew.[15]

At that moment, a shout reverberated through the air, "She's coming out, and she's heading straight for us!"[16] Calmly walking toward the rail, Winslow's hand exchanged his Bible for his eyeglass, which he raised it to his one good eye.[17] Indeed,

moving toward open waters was the greatest American sea raider of the nineteenth century. It was 19 June 1864.

By the time the sun had set that day, a sail and steam warship weighing over 1000 tons rested on the bottom of the English Channel, one hundred and ninety feet below the water's surface.[18]

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[1] John M. Taylor, *Confederate Raider: Raphael Semmes of the 'Alabama'* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1994), 201.

[2] Ibid., 105.

[3] John M. Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2004), 6-7.

[4] Taylor, *Confederate Raider: Raphael Semmes of the 'Alabama*', 202.

[5] John M. Ellicott, *The Life of John Ancrum Winslow* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1901), 191.

[6] Ibid.

[7] Taylor, *Confederate Raider: Raphael Semmes of the 'Alabama*', 199-200.

[8] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 85.

[9] Ellicott, 193.

[10] Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1868), 755.

[11] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, vii.

[12] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 756.

[13] Ibid.

[14] Ellicott, 193.

[15] Taylor, *Confederate Raider: Raphael Semmes of the 'Alabama*', 202.

[16] John M. Taylor, "Showdown Off Cherbourg," in *Raiders and Blockaders: The American Civil War Afloat*, ed. William N. Still (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1998), 173.

[17] Ellicott, 194.

[18] Gordon P. Watts, "Investigation of the Confederate Commerce Raider CSS *Alabama* 2001," CSS Alabama Association, 11 November 2001, 8, accessed 17 November 2017, http://mua.apps.uri.edu/alabama/reports/ala2k1.PDF.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is highly valued. Organizations, both large and small, from the military to the government, from religious groups to the business world, all espouse the benefits of effective leadership. According to the popular leadership coach John C. Maxwell, "Everything rises and falls on leadership."[1] Jack Welch, the highly regarded former chief executive officer of General Electric, devotes the second section of his book, *Winning: The Answers*, to leadership.[2] John Wooden, the legendary basketball coach, once stated, "I think that in any group activity–whether it be business, sports, or family–there has to be leadership or it won't be successful."[3] Over the last seventy-five years, Dale Carnegie's book, *How to Win Friends & Influence People*, has sold over fifteen million copies and Dr. Thomas Gordon's nine books on leadership training have been published in over thirty-two languages.[4] Today, American businesses spend fourteen billion dollars each year training employees on leadership.[5] In institutions of higher education, leadership classes abound.[6] Clearly, there is a strong interest in this topic. However, what exactly is leadership?

Leadership is both an art and a science. The artistic element results from the multitude of variables that influence human behavior and relationships. Dwight D. Eisenhower recognized this aspect by describing leadership as "the art of getting someone else to do something you want them to do because he wants to do it."[7] Leadership is also a science. The study of human behavior throughout history highlights foundational commonalities of how one person influences another. These patterns identify specific outcomes that result from particular behaviors. Using these scientific

elements of leadership, researchers develop models, such as the United States Army's Leadership Requirements Model. Before examining this model in detail, it is valuable to first identify the purpose of this study.

Purpose

The purpose of this comparative case study is to analyze the leadership of two nineteenth century American naval commanders, John A. Winslow and Raphael Semmes. These two leaders provide a valuable case study for several reasons. First, the accomplishments of both men brought them acclaim from their superiors and made them widely popular during their lifetimes. In addition, both officers served in two wars and achieved the rank of admiral. For a short time, Semmes even served as a general in the Confederate Army. Near the end of the Civil War, Winslow and Semmes commanded the ships that fought each other at the Battle of Cherbourg. This event provided an opportunity to match their leadership skills against one another.

The historical analysis in this study provides several lessons for current and future leaders to consider. One conclusion, and the main thesis of this study, is that both Winslow and Semmes achieved superior results due to their outstanding character, presence, and intellect. Specifically, Winslow's selfless commitment to duty, combined with his sound judgment, enabled him to achieve results. He earned the loyalty and respect of his men due to his relentless dedication. Similarly, Semmes combined a passion for the mission, a strong sense of honor, and sound judgment to earn the devotion and trust of his crew. This enabled him to become the most successful commerce raider of the Civil War.

Despite Winslow's accomplishments, history has largely forgotten him. Today, naval commanders, such as David Glasgow Farragut and David Dixon Porter, overshadow the victor of one of the Civil War's great sea battles. Is the lack of scholarship highlighting Winslow's accomplishments warranted? Did his failure to capture Semmes after the sinking of the *Alabama* diminish his achievement? The historical record shows that even though the *Alabama* was sunk late in the war, after it had already caused significant damage to American commercial interests, its loss boosted Northern morale and confirmed the superiority of the U.S. Navy in ship to ship actions. Winslow's renown earned him recognition from the United States Congress, as well as from President Abraham Lincoln. Not only did the public celebrate Winslow's achievement by honoring him with banquets and speech requests, the Navy promoted him and eventually awarded him the rank of rear admiral. As for Winslow's leadership, his willingness to accomplish the mission even while suffering the effects of malaria is noteworthy. His level of commitment, along with his devotion to his crew, and his professional expertise, made him one of the preeminent commanders in the United States Navy.

While myth sometimes clouds reality in our understanding of history, the evidence also shows that the leadership skills of Semmes match his legendary reputation. Today, the name of his ship, the *Alabama*, is widely recognized. Historians rightly hold Semmes in high esteem. His accomplishments in the Civil War brought him worldwide renown and an honored place in the annals of naval history. However, did his Civil War exploits overshadow the truth about his leadership? From motivating his crew, to evading capture, to doing battle against the enemy, to sinking commerce vessels, the evidence

shows that Semmes demonstrated extraordinary leadership. His dedication to the mission, strong character, expertise in seamanship, and sound judgment enabled his successes.

Despite the accomplishments of Winslow and Semmes, both leaders made decisions that cause researchers to question their judgment. While Winslow's shortcomings affected his career, his resiliency and dedication allowed him to overcome these setbacks. For Semmes, his defeat at Cherbourg cast a shadow over an otherwise astounding career. Still, like Winslow, his superior leadership skills enabled him to bounce back and, after returning to the South, he continued to fight for the Confederacy until the war's end.

In examining the leadership of Winslow and Semmes, another question arises. Did their actions prior to the Battle of Cherbourg foreshadow the outcome? In business and the military, past behavior is deemed the best indicator of future behavior. In fact, in the military, not only does it take time for personnel to learn the requisite technical skills, the promotion system allows at least ten years before officers can obtain high-level leadership roles. The analysis reveals that this logic accurately predicts several facets of the Battle of Cherbourg. For Winslow, his past behavior indicates he would put himself in the best position to win and then fight intensely. For Semmes, his decision to fight, as well as his calm demeanor during battle and subsequent escape is consistent with his audacious, cool, and cunning past behaviors.

One attribute that stands out for both Winslow and Semmes is their strong character. This encompasses their ethical values and how these beliefs impacted their leadership style and decision-making. The significance of this attribute warrants further examination. A logical question follows. What was the source of their character?

Moreover, was it the same for both men? The historical record provides strong evidence that the character of both men stemmed from their Christian faith. Winslow descended from some of the earliest Puritan settlers, while Semmes was born into a Roman Catholic family in rural Maryland. Their religious beliefs contributed to their understanding that their lives had meaning. This impacted their commitment to duty, high moral standards, and treatment of others. For Semmes, it influenced his respectful treatment of prisoners. For each commander, their righteous conduct also earned them loyal followers, a great enabler to mission accomplishment.

There is one more question addressed by this study. What lessons can current and future generations of leaders learn from Winslow and Semmes? By studying historical figures, military officers can identify and develop desired leadership skills. In this way, past commanders such as George Washington, John Paul Jones, Robert E. Lee, David Glasgow Farragut, Chester Nimitz, and Douglas MacArthur influence current military leaders. So what about John A. Winslow and Raphael Semmes? Where do they fall among historical leaders? This study shows that both men demonstrated exemplary leadership throughout their careers. Consequently, military officers can benefit by emulating their behaviors. They also serve as excellent examples of officers whose leadership skills align with the United States Army's Leadership Requirements Model.

The Leadership Requirements Model

The Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, presents the Leadership Requirements Model (LRM). It focuses on the centrality of leadership to the Army profession, and, after defining leadership, provides a broad overview of its purpose and its fundamental components.[8] It introduces the LRM and discusses the attributes and

competencies that make up the model.[9] In addition, the Army published the Army Doctrine Reference Publication (ADRP) 6-22, *Army Leadership*, which provides a more in-depth discussion of the fundamental doctrinal principles of leadership.[10] ADRP 6-22 also focuses on the LRM and devotes a section each to the attributes of "character," "presence," and "intellect." For each of these components, it also describes their subcomponents. The publication then covers the competencies of "leads," "develops," and "achieves," and describes the subcomponents of these elements. It finishes by discussing organizational and strategic leadership.[11] Due to the level of detail, the ADRP 6-22 is a valuable publication for understanding the LRM.

Another resource on the LRM is Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development*, which provides a more detailed discussion of leadership than either ADP 6-22 or ADRP 6-22.[12] It focuses on leader development and begins by outlining its main tenets and challenges. It then covers the essential fundamental principles, including setting conditions, providing feedback, enhancing learning, and creating developmental opportunities for subordinates. It concludes with a discussion on learning and developmental activities, such as building trust, leading by example, and creating a positive environment. It provides valuable insight on several components of the LRM.[13]

The Army developed the LRM by using a competency model based on theory and research.[14] After its development, subject matter experts reviewed the model for accuracy.[15] Following its creation, the Army implemented the LRM as its guiding framework for leader development. Instruction begins at the cadet level, where instructors provide the newest members of the Army with assessments and feedback via periodic reviews.[16] These cadet evaluations mirror the officer evaluation reports of Army

officers. The actual wording in the officer evaluation reports matches the language in the LRM.[17] In addition to active duty service members, the LRM also applies to Army civilians, as well as National Guard and Reserve personnel.[18]

For this study, the LRM provides a framework to analyze historical examples of leadership. It defines leadership as "the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."[19] According to the model, leadership is a skill-based construct that may be further developed. However, it acknowledges that "innate traits" influence the process.[20] The model also states that leadership is a component of combat power.[21] This means that effective leadership can enhance the effectiveness of military units. Consequently, military commanders should value leadership as much as manpower, equipment, and training in determining combat strength. Leadership is the tie that connects disparate military entities into an effective fighting force. For this reason, leadership is considered preeminent in the United States military. It is the backbone to mission accomplishment. When serving as Chief of Staff of the United States Army, General Raymond Odierno stated, "Leadership is paramount to our profession."[22]

The LRM breaks down leadership into two fundamental components. These are attributes and competencies. Attributes are what a leader must be, while competencies are what a leader must do. This "be-know-do" model follows the logic that competency without action is ineffective. In other words, before a leader can take action to achieve results, they must possess certain qualifications. Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the LRM's main components and subcomponents. The attributes component consists of "character," "presence," and "intellect."[23]

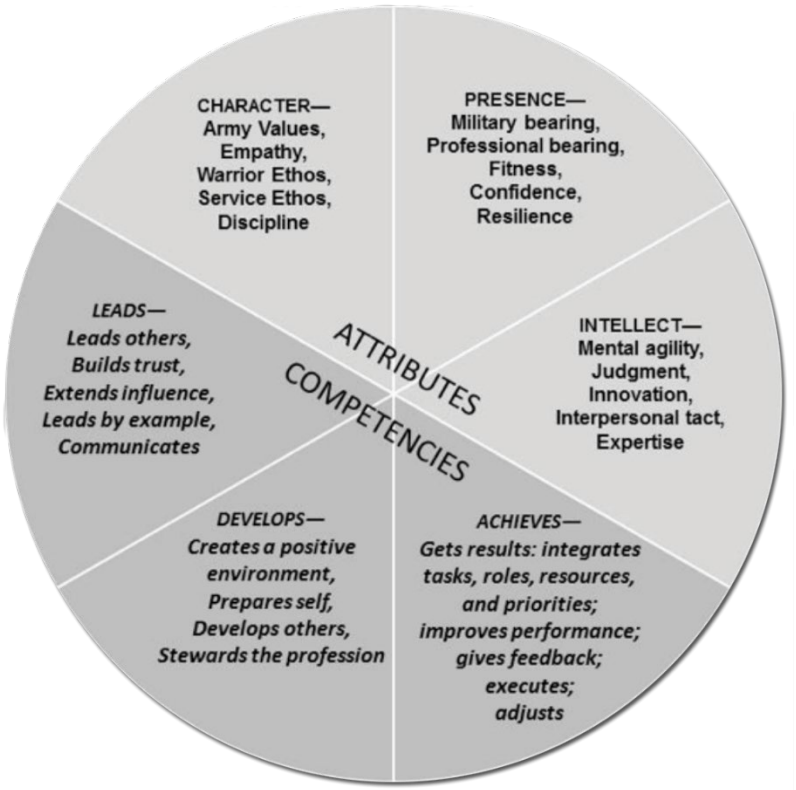

Figure 1. The Leadership Requirements Model

Source: U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-22, *Leader Development* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, June 2015), 1-4.

"Character" is the moral component of an individual. How important is character? Dwight D. Eisenhower stated, "The supreme quality for leadership is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, a football field, in an army, or in an office."[24] The character attribute consists of several elements. The main component is values, which includes loyalty, honor, integrity, selfless service, and courage.[25] Another aspect of character is empathy. Empathy facilitates the leader's understanding of problems and challenges that exist within organizations.[26] The character attribute also encompasses a warrior ethos, which "reflects a Soldier's selfless

commitment to the nation, mission, unit, and fellow Soldiers."[27] It is the source of the Army's "winning spirit."[28] The last component of character is discipline, which is the ability to do what needs to be done even if one does not want to do it. Discipline also includes the enforcement of standards.[29]

The second main attribute of the LRM is "presence." Presence is how others perceive a leader. It is significant in influencing others, especially during times of stress. Often a calm and determined leader can instill confidence in others. This military and professional bearing is a key component of effective presence.[30] In addition, fitness, having sustained physical and mental health, is another behavior that predicts success.[31] Showing confidence also influences one's ability to demonstrate presence. Lastly, resilience, the ability to bounce back following failure or adversity, is a key mental and emotional skill.[32]

The third main attribute of the LRM is "intellect." Intellect includes what the leader knows and how they apply that knowledge. Key subcomponents include mental agility, sound judgment, innovation, interpersonal tact, and expertise.[33] Mental agility means intellectually adapting to changing circumstances using creative and critical thinking. Sound judgment is the ability to assess situations, form rational opinions, and make "sensible decisions."[34] Strong leaders weigh the pros and cons of a course of action to determine its prudence. Innovation includes using problem-solving skills to adapt to new circumstances or to gain an advantage. It also entails developing ideas to meet future contingencies.[35] Expertise is specialized knowledge, often required for situational awareness and decision-making.[36]

In addition to these attributes, the LRM delineates three competencies, which are "leads," "develops," and "achieves."[37] Leading others is a key component of effective leadership. It means influencing others to achieve more than they would on their own. According to the ADRP 6-22, "Leaders motivate, inspire, and influence others to take initiative, work toward a common purpose, accomplish critical tasks, and achieve organizational objectives."[38] Leaders often use a variety of techniques to influence others, such as inspiration and logical persuasion. Trusting relationships facilitate many of these methods.[39] Trust is the conduit through which obedience and loyalty flow. This requires a leader who excels in communication, both verbal and nonverbal. A leader's actions, along with their written and spoken words, enable them to lead effectively. While not specifically stated in the model, leading by example follows the ancient principle, "Do to others as you would have them do to you."[40] A leader also extends their influence inside and outside the chain of command. Causing change outside the command structure is more challenging, due to the leader's lack of direct positional authority.[41]

In addition to leading, a leader also needs to possess the competency of "develops." A leader develops by fostering a positive environment, improving themselves and others, and stewarding the profession.[42] A positive environment is central to maximizing human performance. Low morale squelches motivation. For this reason, leaders need to focus on the mission while also taking care of their people. This involves taking steps to develop team members by delegating responsibility and encouraging initiative.[43] It also includes coaching and mentoring, which enables others to excel in the present and future.[44] In addition, a leader must focus on their own development. Continuing to learn and observe is critical to situational awareness and decision-making.

Developing oneself also involves increasing expertise and improving one's emotional intelligence. Stewardship includes managing resources and taking steps to improve the organization as a whole.[45]

The last competency a leader must exhibit is "achieves." Achieves is the ultimate goal of a leader. It means accomplishing the assigned mission, which is the leader's purpose for being in command.[46] A critical skill in leading others is being able to adapt to new situations and knowing how to apply different leadership techniques depending on the circumstances.[47] A leader effectively prioritizes what needs to be done and coordinates the tasks, roles, and resources necessary to get results.[48] They monitor performance and provide guidance and direction in order to ensure success.[49] A leader is always seeking to improve the performance of their unit. Flawless execution is the sought after end state. In summary, the LRM posits that a leader with character, presence, and intellect is ready to lead, develop, and achieve. Before examining the leadership of Winslow and Semmes using the LRM, an understanding of the historiography provides context to this study.

Historiography

An overview of the prominent works on Winslow and Semmes reveals two primary themes. First, while there are few works dedicated to Winslow, much has been written on Semmes and his exploits on the *Alabama*. Even though Winslow garners praise for his performance in sinking the *Alabama*, analysis of his career is minimal. In contrast, the abundance of works on Semmes reveals a high level of interest and fascination with his accomplishments during the Civil War. Another noteworthy aspect of the historiography is that an in-depth leadership analysis of either commander is absent

from scholarship. In addition, those works that do discuss leadership do not use a model as an analytical framework. Overall, the primary and secondary source material on Winslow and Semmes provides an extensive amount of information that can be used to assess their leadership.

Despite the lack of scholarship on Winslow, several works provide detailed accounts of the main events of his life and career. For example, *The Ruthless Exploits of Admiral Winslow*, published in 1991 by Paul Ditzel, covers the main episodes of Winslow's life.[50] Ditzel starts by covering Winslow's distinguished family heritage before describing key events from his youth, the Mexican War, and the Civil War. Ditzel portrays Winslow in a positive light and points out his courage and successes. He also points out shortcomings, such as Winslow's tendency for periodic outspokenness, which sometimes caused tension with his superiors.[51] Overall, Ditzel's work is a succinct overview of key events in Winslow's life and portrays him as an aggressive, passionate, and successful naval officer.

The definitive work on Winslow is a biography published in 1901. *The Life of John Ancrum Winslow*, by John Ellicott, provides a thorough account of Winslow's life and includes numerous primary sources.[52] By using personal letters to his wife, correspondence with the United States Navy, as well as other official documents, Ellicott covers the ancestry of Winslow, his life accomplishments, and his death.[53] While thorough, this work is biased toward Winslow, due to the fact that Winslow's family commissioned Ellicott to write it. For example, there are sections where Ellicott avoids offering commentary, allowing the primary documents to stand on their own.

While most works cover either Winslow or Semmes, there is a prominent work that covers both men. *The 'Alabama' and the 'Kearsarge:' The Sailor's Civil War*, published by William Marvel in 1996, focuses on the non-officer crewmen who often anonymously fade into history.[54] While Marvel draws from primary source documents in an effort to add new information, he laments that sources are few and biased. Still, Marvel's interest in the *Kearsarge* and Winslow provides a valuable addition to the historiography. His analysis of Winslow is not as favorable as Ellicott's, and he demeans Winslow's character in discussing the Queenstown incident. In addition to Marvel's work, the *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies* provides valuable primary source documents.[55] It includes written correspondence between the commanders and their governments, as well as third party messages regarding their activities. For example, in one instance, a third-party letter provides useful information on the status of the *Sumter*, courtesy of informants.[56]

In contrast to Winslow, there are several primary sources on the career of Semmes. For example, Semmes documented his own life by writing memoirs of his time in service during both the Mexican War and the Civil War. In *Service Afloat and Ashore During the Mexican War*, he provides a detailed accounting of his time serving in the Home Squadron and as aide-de-camp for Major General William Worth.[57] Then, following the Civil War, Semmes penned, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*. In this work, he tells the story of his resignation from the United States Navy and his subsequent exploits as commander of the CSS *Sumter* and the CSS *Alabama*.[58] He also provides an explanation of his reasons for fighting for the South.[59]

Despite the obvious bias in this work, it provides a valuable resource for examining Semmes's leadership.[60]

In addition to these works, there are two other notable primary sources on Semmes. Both accounts, even though published several decades after the conflict, corroborate key details and offer a valuable perspective on events. John McIntosh Kell, the executive officer on the *Sumter* and *Alabama*, published *Recollections of a Naval Life* in 1900.[61] It offers Kell's perspective on key events from the cruises of these Civil War raiders. Due to his being the executive officer and a confidante of Semmes, his approach to leadership and coordination with Semmes offers valuable insight into how the officers maintained good order and discipline. The other work, *Two Years on the Alabama*, written by Arthur Sinclair, only covers the cruise of the *Alabama*.[62] Sinclair, one of ship's officers, published this work in 1896. Because both Kell and Sinclair were close to Semmes, there is bias in their recollections.

Numerous secondary sources also provide valuable insight for this study. For example, "CSS *Alabama* and Confederate Commerce Raiders during the U.S. Civil War," published at the U.S. Naval War College in 2013 by Spencer Tucker, provides information on the strategic logic and effectiveness of commerce raiding in the Civil War. Tucker also recounts the Battle of Cherbourg, with a focus on the *Alabama*.[63] In *Raphael Semmes and the 'Alabama*,' published in 1998, Tucker also focuses on Semmes's accomplishments during the Civil War.[64] In this work, he also provides information on other prominent historical figures related to the story.[65]

A work that specifically focuses on Semmes's leadership is, "Raphael Semmes: A Leadership Study," published by Lynnwood Cockerham in 1986. This monograph, from

the U.S. Air Force Air and Command Staff College, provides an overview of the Civil War career of Semmes and highlights the leadership skills that contributed to his success. Cockerham argues that Semmes' character, discipline, expertise, communication skills, decision-making, planning, and knowledge of international law enabled his accomplishments.[66] Cockerham's focus on identifying key leadership skills is similar to the approach of this study. However, he does not use the current leadership model as an analytical framework.

The Confederate Raider 'Alabama,' edited by Philip Van Doren Stern, and published in 1962, contains excerpts from *Memoirs of Service Afloat in the War Between the States* by Raphael Semmes. It covers the critical period of the *Alabama* from 1862-1865.[67] It also contains an account of the battle with the *Kearsarge*, written by Kell for *The Century* magazine in 1886. Stern includes Kell's work because Semmes provides minimal commentary on the battle in his own memoirs.[68] Another work, *Shark of the Confederacy*, published in 1995 by Charles M. Robinson, also focuses on Semmes during the Civil War.[69] While briefly covering the *Sumter*, Robinson's main intent is to tell the story of the *Alabama*. Similar to these works, *Wolf of the Deep: Raphael Semmes and the Notorious Confederate Raider CSS 'Alabama*,' published by Stephen Fox in 2007, focuses on the exploits of Semmes in the Civil War. However, in part of the first chapter, Fox does discuss the early history of the life and career of Semmes.[70]

Raphael Semmes: The Philosophical Mariner, published by Warren Spencer in 1997, adds to the historical record by analyzing Semmes's mind and the personal details of his life. It relies on unpublished diaries to provide a more thorough look at the man behind the accomplishments of the *Alabama*. Details on the personality and intellectual

interests of Semmes shed additional light on his leadership philosophy. Spencer points out that Semmes had a high level of intelligence and a habit of thoroughly preparing for each mission. Spencer argues that Semmes had a complex nature and often used situational leadership in dealing with his crew. As a result, providing a simple characterization of Semmes and his leadership style proves difficult.[71]

John M. Taylor is responsible for a number of recent works on Semmes. In *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, published in 2004, he provides a chronological account of his career.[72] He examines both primary and secondary sources. While not focusing solely on the leadership of Semmes, he mentions key traits and relies on the writings of crewmembers for insight.[73] Taylor also quotes contemporaries of Semmes to provide additional perspective on his accomplishments.[74] In *Confederate Raider: Raphael Semmes of the 'Alabama*,' published in 1994, Taylor devotes a chapter to Semmes's experiences during the Mexican War, before covering his exploits in the Civil War.[75]

Taylor also covers Semmes in several scholarly articles. For example, in "Showdown off Cherbourg," published in William N. Still's 1998 *Raiders and Blockaders*, Taylor provides a detailed recounting of the battle and gives information on the two commanding officers.[76] While the chapter briefly mentions Winslow, the main focus is on the *Alabama* and Semmes. In the same work, Taylor writes a section titled, "Defiance: Raphael Semmes of the *Alabama*," which provides a brief overview of the life of Semmes and his performance in the Civil War. While Taylor points out many of the leadership qualities of Semmes, he also comments that historians do not always give him enough credit. He suggests that the reason for this could be because all but one of the *Alabama*'s victims were merchant vessels.[77]

In "Neutral Schmootral!" published in 2003, Taylor provides valuable details on international maritime law and how it affected the belligerent and neutral parties during the war. He describes the challenges faced by Union warships in capturing Confederate raiders and how Semmes used maritime law to avoid capture while in command of both the *Sumter* and the *Alabama*. In addition to allowing deception via false colors, the rules of the sea stipulated that a ship had to wait twenty-four hours before it could pursue an adversary out of a neutral port. Taylor also provides details on Semmes's tactics during the battle with the USS *Hatteras* off Galveston. He also describes how the *Alabama* escaped from Martinique and how Union frustrations led to later violations of the rules of neutrality. Still, Taylor points out that breaches of maritime law were rare.[78]

There are also numerous other scholarly articles written on Semmes. For example, "*Alabama's* Defeat Was No Surprise," published in 2004 by Eugene Canfield, provides analysis of the Battle of Cherbourg and insight into the reasons for its outcome.[79] Canfield focuses on the tactical level, providing specifics on the gun types, the chain armor employed by the USS *Kearsarge*, and the training of the crews. He analyzes various factors in determining which variables most heavily influenced the outcome.[80] He argues that the *Kearsarge* won the battle due to better armament, a better-trained crew, and effective powder.[81] "Inside Semmes," published by Craig Newton in 1993, discusses Semmes's decision to challenge the *Kearsarge*.[82] It discusses the pros and cons of the scenario, as well as the views of those who criticize Semmes. However, Newton points out that few people, including the *Alabama*'s crew, fault the decision to fight.

Norman Delaney's, "At Semmes' Hand," in Still's 1998 work, *Raiders and Blockaders*, focuses on the engagement between the USS *Hatteras* and the CSS *Alabama*.

It covers the historical context, as well as the major players, the battle, and the effects.[83] The 2011 work, "The *Alabama's* Bold and Determined Man," also by Delaney, provides valuable insight into the life of the crew and how they related to Semmes. It focuses on Michael Maher, one of the crewmen from the Royal Navy.[84] It also provides details on the Battle of Cherbourg.[85] Another work by Delaney, "The Firing Here Became Continual," published in 2016, provides a firsthand account of the Battle of Cherbourg from one of the crewmen of the *Alabama*.[86] It first describes the activities leading up to the battle. It then covers the damage to the *Alabama*, the casualties, the sinking, and the recovery of the men. The author concludes that the account, provided to a *New York Herald* reporter four days after the battle was from a young Englishman named Henry Higgins.[87] This recollection serves as a valuable firsthand account.

In "Raphael Semmes and the Battle off Cherbourg," published in 2017, Bud Feuer briefly discusses Semmes's resignation from the United States Navy and his subsequent assignment as a Confederate raider captain. Feuer provides details on the *Alabama's* escape from England before the vessel could be seized for violating neutrality laws. The article then describes how Semmes joined the vessel in the Azores and recruited his crew. It also recounts the battle between the *Alabama* and the *Hatteras* off Galveston and describes how Semmes deceived the USS *Vanderbilt* to escape capture off Brazil. Feuer also provides insight on the reason for Winslow's assignment to the USS *Kearsarge,* and Winslow's surprise on hearing that Semmes would challenge him at Cherbourg. Feuer also recounts how both ships prepared for the battle, the confusion surrounding the ceasefire, and the escape of Semmes on the *Deerhound*. In addition, he provides valuable information on the discovery of the *Kearsarge*'s protective chains by a member of the

Alabama's crew after the ceasefire. The article concludes with a brief accounting of Semmes's experience on the USS *Somer* during the Mexican War.[88]

"Raphael Semmes' Later Career," published by Paul F. Bradley in 1999, describes key events in Semmes's life following the sinking of the *Alabama*. After recovering in Europe from a wound sustained during the battle, Semmes returned to the South via Mexico. He then received command of the James River Squadron, which protected Richmond from Union attack. However, the small fleet of gunboats and ironclads could not stand up to the Union Navy and Semmes destroyed the ships when Richmond fell in 1865. Semmes then transferred to the Confederate Army and briefly served as a brigadier general. At the end of the war, Major General William T. Sherman paroled Semmes. However, due to the North's characterization of him as a pirate, he was later arrested. Nevertheless, due to questionable evidence and the desire to reunify the country, he was soon released.[89] In summary, despite the number of works on both Winslow and Semmes, this study adds a new perspective to the historiography by using a leadership model to analyze the leadership of each commander.

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CHAPTER 2

JOHN A. WINSLOW

The career of John A. Winslow included extensive travel and varied experiences. After chasing pirates in the West Indies and serving in the Pacific, Winslow fought in the war with Mexico, where he lost a vessel under his command and engaged in combat ashore. During the Civil War, he first served on river gunboats. Then, following personal injury and a request for transfer, the Secretary of the Navy gave him the task of hunting Confederate raiders on the high seas. The resulting confrontation with the most feared and successful raider, the *Alabama*, forever secured Winslow's place in the annals of naval history.[1]

Early Career

Some might argue that Winslow was born a warrior. He descended from the first Puritan settlers who arrived in the New World. Biographer John Ellicott credits this heritage with giving Winslow his "integrity, perseverance, and fortitude."[2] In 1807, Winslow's father moved from Boston, Massachusetts, to Wilmington, North Carolina, to pursue his business interests. It was there that Winslow was born in November 1811 and baptized in the Protestant Episcopal Church. As a boy, Winslow spent time at the docks, observing ships. He probably heard about his great grandfather on his mother's side, Vice Admiral William Rhett, who defeated a French and Spanish fleet that threatened Charleston, South Carolina in 1704, during the Queen Anne's War.[3] Rhett also fought and captured the pirate "Blackbeard," along with his vessel in 1718.[4] According to biographer John Ellicott, "From this hero of Carolina, Winslow inherited the ambition to

become a naval warrior and the qualities necessary for success in such a calling."[5] These leadership elements enabled Winslow, like his great grandfather, to defeat the most infamous "pirate" of his day.[6]

Since Winslow's father wanted his sons educated in the North, as soon as he could, he sent Winslow and his brother back to Massachusetts. Under the tutelage of a reverend named Mr. Sewall, Winslow prepared for college, but had a desire for a naval career. Through the assistance of Daniel Webster, the influential politician, who respected the Winslow family, Winslow received a commission in the United States Navy in 1827, at the age of eighteen.[7] The Navy was a highly respected institution and an officer's commission required an appointment from a political leader. This protocol still exists today for new accessions to the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis.[8]

At the time, President John Quincy Adams and Secretary of the Navy Samuel Southard were taking steps to reform the Navy and advocated for a naval academy. While partisan politics in Congress narrowly defeated the academy provision in 1826, Southard improved navy yards, standardized discipline through a criminal code, and improved recruitment. These changes coincided with the Navy taking on a larger role in American life, as maritime commerce expanded dramatically in the 1830s.[9] By the early 1840s, the Navy operated six squadrons throughout the world and in 1845 the Naval Academy was founded.[10]

In the pre-academy era, naval midshipmen learned the trade through on the job training, similar to an apprenticeship. Civilian instructors on ships conducted most of the academic training, but these tutors did not hold rank and held little sway unless supported by the ship's captain. Without a standard curriculum, training varied from ship to ship.[11]

Instruction ashore occurred at various navy yards, but attending these schools was not mandatory. While the intent was to educate midshipmen in the liberal arts, mathematics dominated the curriculum.[12]

During this time, young men often joined the Navy while still in their teens. Little had changed since the pre-War of 1812 era, when sixty-four percent of new officers were between the ages of twelve and eighteen. The average age was seventeen. In addition to age, selection favored those with "good health, courage, moral character, a strong family background, education, and a desire for glory."[13] During their training at sea, midshipmen, in addition to learning the practical art and science of the naval profession, learned the social etiquette of officership. Earning command of a ship was a valuable stepping-stone for future advancement. For example, David Farragut, who served as an admiral during the Civil War, commanded a vessel during the War of 1812, when he was only twelve years old.[14]

During Winslow's early career, it took about six years to become a passed midshipman and another four to six years to become a lieutenant.[15] While the lieutenant exam was intended to remove unsatisfactory performers, in the 1830's the exam became routine and, in 1842, every midshipman passed.[16] The typical time requirements for promotion were partly dictated by the high number of senior officers, a consequence of the War of 1812. At the time, the Navy, like the Army, lacked a forced retirement system.[17] Consequently, in 1838, Isaac Hull, commodore of the Mediterranean Squadron, remained in service despite failing health at the age of sixty-five.[18] In addition, while the Army had a total of nine officer ranks, the Navy had only three above lieutenant.[19] The

size of the Navy also impacted a sailor's time at sea and their ability to achieve command. In 1841, the Navy only had a total of sixty-seven ships.[20]

Even though West Point was founded in 1802, the American republic, cautious of standing militaries, did not support a naval version of the military academy in the early 19th century. Moreover, sending new recruits out on ships was seen as the best way to acquaint them with life at sea. This also mirrored the British Royal Navy's approach to producing "skilled combat leaders."[21] However, as America's role in the world increased, the Navy's importance grew with it. The skills required by officers changed as the science and technology of the industrial revolution led to a push for more formal education to accompany at-sea practical training. More than in the past, naval officers needed to be "warriors, diplomats, explorers, and technicians."[22] Winslow and Semmes successfully bridged the gap between the old and new systems of officer development. In fact, two midshipmen who entered the Naval Academy in 1857 left after only three years to serve with Semmes on the *Sumter* and the *Alabama* during the Civil War.[23]

As for Winslow, his training and advancement within the Navy was fairly typical of junior officers of his day. He first served on the USS *Falmouth*, where he spent three years hunting pirates in the West Indies. This experience foreshadowed, and might have benefited, Winslow's efforts against Civil War raiders almost forty years later.[24] On the *Falmouth*, Winslow also ventured around Cape Horn to the Pacific Ocean. In 1833, he returned home and qualified as a passed midshipman after six years of service. For his next assignment, he served in the Brazilian Squadron on the *Erie* and *Ontario* until 1837.[25] Soon after returning to Boston, he married his cousin, Catherine Amelia, on 18

October 1837. They eventually had five sons and two daughters. Two years later, at the age of thirty, he was promoted to lieutenant.[26]

In 1841, while on shore duty in Boston, Winslow demonstrated his leadership by helping extinguish a fire on a British vessel in the harbor. The queen thanked him by awarding him epaulettes and a sword-knot.[27] The following year, in July 1842, Winslow reported to the USS *Missouri*. The technologically advanced warship was a steam paddle frigate of 2200 tons, with two 600 horsepower engines, and two 240-pound guns, which were the largest afloat.[28] It also had ten 68-pound guns.[29] However, during a port call in Gibraltar in August 1843, while the officers were ashore, the vessel caught fire. Upon hearing the commotion, Winslow returned to the ship to help save it. The captain, recognizing the vessel was lost, ordered Winslow to abandon ship.[30] Instead, Winslow ran to his cabin to retrieve some personal items. To avoid the spreading flames, he escaped through a porthole on the gun deck.[31]

In 1842, Winslow designed a new type of ship. In a letter to his wife from the USS *Missouri,* he described his camel-steam tug invention for use in moving large vessels over shallow seas. According to Winslow, it was a simple and practical idea.[32] Winslow even obtained a patent for his design and submitted it to Navy headquarters.[33] While the Navy launched the USS *Princeton*, the world's first steam powered propeller-driven ship, in 1843, it chose not to pursue Winslow's project.[34] Historian Paul Ditzel points out that having done so might have benefited the North during the Civil War. Nevertheless, Winslow's problem-solving abilities foreshadowed the improvements he made to Civil War gunboats twenty years later.

The Mexican War

In December 1845, Winslow received orders to the USS *Cumberland* to serve as a division officer. Due to the likelihood of war, the vessel sailed to Mexico instead of the Mediterranean. Once in theater, it assumed duties as the flagship of the American fleet.[35] Winslow, recovering from a bacteria infection, called erysipelas, which had first effected him a year prior, wrote, "I am still quite weak, though convalescing and hope soon to be able to attend to duty."[36] Despite his illness, Winslow refused to return home for treatment and continued to serve throughout the war.

Several incidents from this time reveal Winslow's character. He commended Major General Zachary Taylor's actions in seizing the town of Metamoras in May 1846. Instead of attacking the town, Taylor surrounded it, achieving its surrender while saving lives. From his perspective, Winslow proudly stated, "Our army is so restricted by discipline that no violence or insult will be offered the inhabitants."[37] In a letter to his wife on 21 May, Winslow lamented the disadvantaged condition of the Mexicans. He wrote, "I pity these people."[38]

Winslow also cared for his own men. On 21 June 1846, he recorded a heartbreaking accident. During Winslow's watch, he ordered a member of his crew to take in some sail. In doing so, the sailor fell overboard and drowned. Winslow wrote, "[The event] filled me with sorrow from the fact that his life was lost obeying my order, and threw a gloom over my feelings."[39] Several months later, in November 1846, Winslow helped bury an officer who had been shot in the throat during a raid on the town of Tobasco. The day of the funeral, he wrote, "One has only to see the misery which war creates to become sick of its horrors."[40]

Winslow's character also impacted his views on the conduct of war. He accused the Mexicans of not fighting "civilized warfare" by using ambush tactics.[41] His convictions also led him to criticize his own country. While off Vera Cruz in August 1846, he wrote, "This has been an unjust war, coveting and seizing territory which did not belong to us."[42] This recognition of right and wrong, combined with a strong sense of honor, guided Winslow throughout his career.

Despite his views regarding the legitimacy of the war, Winslow wanted the Navy to adopt a more aggressive role. After the Battle of Alvarado in late 1846, Winslow criticized Commodore David Conner's decision to retreat after only firing a dozen shells into the "dilapidated" fort.[43] The halfhearted effort failed to capture the town or the squadron of Mexican vessels. After "a thousand" Mexican soldiers arrived on the beach to contest the landing, the Americans retreated. After the battle, reports indicated that the one thousand men really numbered around two hundred.[44]

In October 1846, Winslow got his own chance to engage in combat, and helped Commodore Matthew Perry, who had replaced Conner, capture Mexican boats at the town of Tobasco. In the operation, involving seven ships and over two hundred men, Winslow landed ashore on the 29th. Disregarding orders from Perry, Winslow and his detachment of men advanced beyond the beach to dislodge enemy soldiers who were firing at them from the town's rooftops. After advancing to a square in the town, Winslow wanted to push farther and returned to the rear to request permission. Denied, he rejoined his men, who continued firing from their position.[45] At sunset, Winslow grudgingly complied with orders to disembark on the barges.[46] After the fight, he wrote to his wife, "I was the only one on shore fully engaged with the enemy, but I escaped

unhurt. My trust was fully in God's protection."[47] This battle also occurred only two months after Winslow refused Commodore Conner's recommendation that he travel to the hospital in Pensacola for treatment of his erysipelas.[48]

In recognition of his bravery, Commodore Perry commended Winslow to the Navy Department and rewarded him with command of the *Union*, a captured Mexican sailing sloop.[49] Less than two months later, the vessel, renamed the USS *Morris*, soon tested Winslow's leadership. During a storm on the night of 16 December 1846, waves pushed the *Morris* onto a reef. To mitigate his lack of navigation equipment, Winslow used the USS *John Adams* to guide his position. However, the *John Adams* began to drift, and Winslow had no way of knowing. As the waves crashed over the *Morris* and sinking seemed imminent, the crew requested to abandon ship.[50] Winslow shouted in response, "Go if you wish, then. I'm staying aboard!"[51] Despite his efforts, Winslow could not save the vessel. In the aftermath of losing his first ship, Winslow maintained his confidence. He realized the Commodore should not have sent the *Morris* out without navigation equipment. The Commodore agreed.[52]

Following this episode, Winslow transferred to the USS *Raritan*. During this period, Winslow shared a stateroom with another junior officer, Raphael Semmes, who had recently lost a ship under his command in a squall. Winslow teased his new friend telling him, "They are going to send you out to learn to take care of ships in blockade." Semmes countered, "They are going to send you out to learn the bearing of reefs."[53] For both men, their confidence and resilience enabled them to bounce back. Twenty years later, these attributes also helped Semmes recover after losing his ship to Winslow and the crew of the USS *Kearsarge*. This episode also reveals the influence of Winslow's

character. Years later, despite their short time together on the *Raritan*, Semmes remembered Winslow, writing, "He was the Christian gentleman."[54]

Interwar Period

After the war, Winslow served as ordnance officer at the Boston Navy Yard before receiving orders to the USS *Saratoga* as executive officer.[55] Joining the vessel in New York in April 1848, he wrote to his wife, "I was glad to hear the Captain reading prayers to the crew at muster. I told him I would cheerfully back him."[56] In another letter to his wife, Winslow explained his leadership approach. He stated, "I am more pleased in discovering traits of character in the men, with a view of exerting a healthy influence over those who seem capable of being improved."[57] Winslow also realized the necessity of self-development. During a port visit to Pensacola in August 1849, Winslow traveled eight miles on a "very hot day" to attend church services.[58]

Another event during Winslow's time on the *Saratoga* provides a glimpse into his character. While at the island of Sacrificios, near Tampico, Mexico, Winslow found a white gravestone for a deceased British officer. With it were two letters requesting assistance in setting up the grave. Winslow wrote to his wife that he planned to help if a British ship did not arrive, "as one day we may have to ask similar favors."[59] Nine days later, Winslow led his men in clearing out the overgrown grave in preparation for building a mausoleum.[60]

During his year and a half on the *Saratoga,* Winslow perfected his invention of a tug for moving ships over shallow waters, which could have opened up numerous American ports to deep draft vessels. Winslow even built a miniature model of his camel-steam tug to send to Washington.[61] While the U.S. Navy never acted on his proposal,

Winslow's inclination toward problem solving continued and, during the Civil War, he designed protective armament modifications to river gunboats and later added "iron sides" to the USS *Kearsarge*.

While suffering homesickness during his time on the *Saratoga*, Winslow wrote his wife from Pensacola, Florida, "This is the reason I hope so much for a change of profession from this life at sea of constant privation and hardships, exposed to all climates and their diseases, with a small salary which hardly gives one a support."[62] In addition to recognizing the challenges he and his men faced, Winslow also wanted to lead his family, and his long absences made this difficult. While he did not yet have children, he looked ahead to that time and explained to his wife that he desired to have a life at home so "that our children may be educated in the knowledge of the true purpose of life."[63] Following his assignment on the *Saratoga*, Winslow gained a respite from sea life. He spent the next two years stationed at home in Boston.

In December 1851, Lieutenant Winslow's next set of orders took him all the way to the Pacific with the USS *St. Lawrence*, where challenges with the crew tested his leadership and diminished his enthusiasm. In San Francisco, in August of the following year, five of Winslow's crewmembers deserted with "gold fever." This occurred despite the posting of sentries armed with loaded muskets and pistols.[64] Constantly on duty, Winslow only left the ship once. Winslow lamented, but did not disagree with, the strict discipline imposed on the crew and the need to leave San Francisco due to the distractions.

From their next port, Honolulu, Winslow wrote in September 1852, "Few people know the trials of the Navy Life, this continued surveillance of the worst set of

scoundrels under the sun."[65] One crewmember even attacked another with an ax and four men were "confined for attempt at murder."[66] Later, in a letter from Valparaiso, Chile, after commenting on the threat of war in Europe and the outbreak of the Taipang rebellion in China, Winslow wrote, "Our country is not secure either; corruption in morals, in the Government, the people everywhere forgetting the great Author of their happiness."[67]

Despite his time away from home and challenges with the crew, Winslow remained in the Navy. In June 1854, he wrote to his wife, "Your letter with accounts of home made me homesick. It requires great self denial to be away from you all."[68] The timing and location of his next assignment proved fortuitous. Winslow again reported to Boston to spend another period with his family while overseeing recruitment.[69] It is possible this restful shore duty contributed to Winslow's later successes in the great conflict of his age. During the Civil War, he served valiantly under demanding circumstances, even while suffering a severe decline in personal health.

Western Flotilla

At the outbreak of the Civil War, despite knowing the trials that war would bring, Winslow continued to serve.[70] In September 1861, he wrote, "[God] has raised me from the depression and given me hope that in the end I shall have peace."[71] At the time, the Union Navy consisted of seven thousand men and forty ships.[72] In contrast, the almost nonexistent Confederate Navy had ten ships and fifteen guns.[73] Captain Andrew H. Foote, who had taken command of the Western Flotilla on 6 September 1861, knew Winslow's abilities and requested him as his chief assistant.[74] Foote was also a devout

Christian and had previously distinguished himself in operations against the slave trade in Africa and in China during the Second Opium War.[75]

In December 1861, after taking command of the USS *Benton,* the largest vessel in the fleet*,* Winslow ran the ship aground while trying to reach Cairo from Saint Louis.[76] The designer of the boat, James B. Eads, was onboard and when the vessel hit bottom, Eads volunteered to help dislodge it. Eads proposed running hawsers in the opposite direction. Winslow humbly responded, "Mr. Eads, if you will undertake to get her off, I shall be very willing to place the entire crew under your direction."[77] During the evolution, a chain broke and one of the pieces cut through Winslow's coat and entered his arm below the elbow.[78] Winslow acknowledged the severity of the wound, recognizing that it could have killed him if it had struck him in the torso. Even so, he wrote to his wife, "I hope to be confined but a short time."[79]

Winslow returned to duty in May 1862 and observed the attack by Confederate rams against the flotilla at Fort Pillow, Tennessee.[80] In June 1862, Winslow received command of the USS *Cincinnati*, one of the seven ironclad gunboats, and patrolled off Memphis after the city surrendered.[81] On 22 June, during an expedition down the White River in Arkansas, guerrillas attacked just after Winslow had finished reading Sunday prayers and was going ashore. Two of his men were killed. In response, the following day Winslow took two gunboats and a company of soldiers and captured three prisoners.[82]

Soon after taking command of the *Cincinnati*, Winslow devised armor modifications to protect the boilers on the gunboats.[83] Subsequently, additional gunboats received similar protective measures and, during her battle with the CSS *Arkansas* in July 1862, Winslow credits these improvements with saving the USS *Carondelet*.[84] In July

1862, Winslow was finally promoted to the rank of captain. The following month, an ear infection, which had bothered Winslow during the Mexican War, returned. Even so, he remained in theater and, in August 1862, while commanding the USS *St. Louis*, seized a Confederate boat sending supplies, including swords and uniform items, out of Memphis.[85]

Despite his successes, Winslow made several decisions during his time with the Western Flotilla that raise questions about his judgment. First, following news of the Union defeat at the Second Battle of Bull Run in August 1862, Winslow shared his frustration on the war effort with a reporter from the *Baltimore American*. As a passionate abolitionist, Winslow was in favor of freeing the slaves. Winslow also directly criticized President Abraham Lincoln, stating, probably with some sarcasm, that it would be a good thing if the Confederates took Lincoln prisoner.[86] Winslow stated, "Until something drastic is done to arouse Washington we shall have no fixed policy."[87] Winslow also caused controversy by taking a captured Confederate officer from Fort Donelson onboard one of the Union gunboats.[88] Winslow justified his conduct by stating he wanted to show the armament modifications that fully protected the boilers as a means of deterrence.[89]

In October 1862, Winslow requested re-assignment after it became known that David Dixon Porter, who was junior in rank to Winslow, would gain command of the Western Flotilla.[90] Winslow wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Navy, Gideon Welles, stating his desire to serve in the Western Flotilla had been contingent on being under Foote, who received orders to command the South Atlantic Blockading Squadron.[91] However, before taking command, Foote suddenly died in June 1863. While Winslow's

explanation for the transfer request is reasonable, the episode casts a shadow on Winslow's judgment. If he had waited to send the letter, it would not have seemed directly related to the promotion of Porter. In response, Welles relieved Winslow, sending him to Boston to await his next assignment.[92] Upon learning of his departure, Winslow's twelve officers wrote him a letter:

> We feel indeed that no greater calamity could have befallen us than to part with you at this time. Your unexampled deportment, your kind and forbearing nature, in connection with your many Christian virtues, has so completely attached us to you, that we feel with deep regret the loss we are about to sustain.[93]

In the midst of these circumstances, Winslow arrived home in Roxbury, Massachusetts, a suburb of Boston, in early November. He also suffered from malaria and a disease of his right eye that confined him to bed.[94] At this point, an objective observer might have predicted this was the beginning of the end of Winslow's career. However, a month after returning home, the resilient Winslow accepted orders to assume command of a new ship and departed New York on 7 December 1862 to hunt commerce raiders. Facing a decline in personal health and assigned a mission that could be described as searching for "a needle in a haystack," Winslow decided to tackle the challenge with tenacity. In so doing, he turned adversity into success and became a national hero.

USS *Kearsarge*

In November 1862, the USS *Kearsarge*, under the command of Captain Charles Pickering and needing repairs due to poor construction, waited for a dry dock in Cadiz, Spain.[95] Soon thereafter, Welles issued orders for new leadership.[96] From New York, Winslow traveled on the USS *Vanderbilt* to the island of Fayal in the Azores and

waited.[97] Arriving in Fayal the day before Christmas, Winslow's subsequent letters to his wife show the ensuing three-month delay frustrated the ambitious captain.[98]

Interestingly, Winslow's letters do not express disappointment with his new mission of chasing raiders around a vast ocean–a mission that Welles himself described in his diary as a "fruitless errand of searching the wide ocean for this wolf from Liverpool."[99] According to historian Paul Ditzel, "Winslow sourly realized he was being shipped out to left field."[100] To historian John M. Taylor, command of the *Kearsarge* was the lowest position for Winslow's rank of captain.[101] Nevertheless, if Winslow felt the mission was punitive in nature, he did not convey this in his letters and Ellicott does not address it in his biography.

So far in the war, U.S. Navy warships had few accomplishments against the raiders. While Welles wrote in his diary on 14 September 1862, that "something energetic must be done," he also stated he had "no vessels to spare from the blockade."[102] Even so, in response to the CSS *Sumter*'s captures in the Caribbean, Welles sent six vessels in pursuit.[103] One of these ships, the USS *Iroquois,* found the *Sumter* in St. Pierre, Martinique in November 1861. However, the Confederate vessel, under the command of Captain Raphael Semmes, escaped during the night.[104] In January 1862, the USS *Kearsarge* cornered the *Sumter* in Gibraltar, but due to the extensive repairs needed to the engines and hull, Semmes abandoned the vessel and escaped to England.[105] Other raiders, including the CSS *Florida*, which was constructed in Liverpool, England, were coming on line. Commanded by John Maffitt, the *Florida* ran the Union blockade in September 1862, and docked in Mobile, Alabama, in an effort to outfit a full crew.[106] After using a storm and the cover of night to run the blockade the other way, Maffitt took his first prize

off Cuba in January 1863 and over the next seven months captured eighteen more ships before pulling into Brest, France, for repairs.[107]

The U.S. Navy's lack of success against the raiders stemmed mainly from two factors. First, most Federal ships were committed to the blockade of the Southern coast. This fleet had grown to 264 vessels by the end of 1861 and eventually involved five hundred ships and one hundred thousand men.[108] Surprisingly, Welles initially only sent six ships into the West Indies to counter the raiders. The second factor was strategy. The pursuit ships often responded to reported sightings, but after arriving at the locations, the Confederate vessel was usually gone.[109] While the USS *San Jacinto* succeeded in finding the *Alabama* at the port of Martinique in November 1862, the Confederate vessel easily escaped under the cover of night. Trapping a ship in port typically required more than one vessel.[110]

While not a top priority for Welles, the apparent inability of the U.S. Navy to slow down the Confederate commerce raiders had significant consequences. From 1860 to 1863, American merchant vessels transferring to foreign ownership increased by a factor of eight.[111] This transfer of wealth curtailed the profits of Union merchantmen. In addition, the public embarrassment caused by the raiders seemingly unhindered captures forced Welles to respond. Winslow, in his corner of the ocean, could make a difference.

As he had done throughout his career, Winslow demonstrated commitment to his mission. In fact, in departing Boston, Winslow disregarded the concerns of his doctor, who said he was unfit to travel.[112] In fact, on the day Winslow finally took command of the *Kearsarge*, 6 April 1863, he wrote, "I have been so sick for a day or two (the very time work commences) that I don't know when I have suffered more pain; yesterday I

had pain in all my bones, and the neuralgia in my eye and face was excruciating."[113] Winslow realized he needed a specialist, but there were none on Fayal.[114]

Nevertheless, the pain in his inflamed eye did not assuage Winslow's dedication, and he aggressively pursued reports of raiders. For example, in the same letter of 6 April describing his poor health, Winslow wrote, "As the *Alabama* was reported to be off the Western Islands I go at once in pursuit of her."[115] On 25 April, Winslow recalled his small boats in only seventeen minutes and commenced pursuit of an unknown vessel. Nearly seven hours later, he lost contact at nightfall.[116] In September 1863, Winslow left Madeira Island, southwest of Portugal, in search of the *Florida* in the Irish Channel.[117] In October 1863, after finally cornering the *Florida* in Brest, he wrote, "I would have gone to Paris to consult an oculist had it not been for the peculiar position I am placed in with the *Florida*."[118] Even with his declining health, Winslow remained steadfast to the mission.

Winslow also demonstrated sound judgment and innovation as commander of the *Kearsarge*. Similar to his efforts on the river gunboats, his modifications contributed to success. Even though it was launched in October 1861, the new wind and steam powered *Kearsarge* lacked protective armor. To mitigate this, in May 1863, Winslow's crew suspended heavy chains close together down the sides of the vessel.[119] The crew then covered the chains with boards to conceal their presence. It is likely the idea came from Lieutenant James S. Thornton, Winslow's experienced executive officer, whose previous ship, the USS *Hartford*, employed chains in a similar manner.[120]

Winslow continued the actions of the previous commander in preparing the crew for battle. Pickering had drilled the gun crews on almost a daily basis.[121] To assess his

men, Winslow conducted a practice shoot against a target with the big guns and small arms fifteen days after leaving Fayal Island.[122] In June 1863, after departing Gibraltar and searching a suspected blockade-runner, Winslow continued cruising for a week while drilling his crew, which numbered about 163 men.[123] On the twenty-ninth day of that month, his crew spent over an hour working the guns and firing practice rounds. Winslow also drilled the crew with rifles. One sailor noted it was the first time he had fired a rifle during his over year and a half tenure in the Navy.[124] After receiving word of the *Florida*'s visit to Ireland, Winslow headed in that direction and, during one call to arms, the deck readied for action in six minutes.[125] In these ways, Winslow energized the crew and kept them ready for battle.[126]

Winslow's challenges included leading a crew that experienced the commitment and discipline challenges common to sailors on Navy vessels. During the long delay in Cadiz, despite Pickering's efforts to keep the crew busy, some men still deserted.[127] The hardships of life at sea and the temptations of port pulled men away. To mitigate this loss, Pickering recruited eight men at the dockyard. However, only one of these men finished the cruise.[128] While the majority of the crew performed their duties, several incidents of misbehavior occurred prior to Winslow assuming command.[129] "Liberty incidents" were common during port calls, where the strict oversight and discipline of shipboard life suddenly disappeared.

For example, on 21 January 1863, during efforts to subdue two drunken crewmembers returning from liberty, one was slashed by a sword.[130] At Algeciras, near Gibraltar, some of the crew returned to the ship late, spent time in jail, and fought with crews from other ships.[131] One crewman even earned himself a court martial after he

returned to the ship in a raucous state.[132] In Gibraltar, the ships wardroom steward deserted and in the Azores a crewman earned a court martial for drunkenness.[133] To punish these infractions, captains typically placed disobedient sailors in irons.[134]

After Winslow assumed command in April 1863, fights among the crew, liberty incidents, and desertions continued.[135] In fact, desertions in Brest in late 1863 left Winslow shorthanded.[136] To prevent additional losses, he resigned seventeen of his crew with expiring enlistments, giving them a twenty-five percent pay increase.[137] Winslow also recruited almost two-dozen men at Cadiz in February 1864.[138] Three months later, while in Flushing, present day Holland, sixteen of Winslow's crew visited the port jail. However, the police obliged Winslow by returning the sailors to the ship.[139]

Winslow sought to develop his crew by improving their character. He continued his "old practice of reading prayers to the crew on Sundays; and addressing them afterwards in explanation."[140] In fact, Captain Winslow preached "the first sermon ever heard on the quarterdeck."[141] According to Winslow, the crew always seemed to look forward to Sundays and assembled themselves voluntarily.[142] He believed that his instruction imparted confidence to the crew and created a comfortable environment.[143] However, one crewman, William Wainwright, called Winslow a "dry old preacher" and claimed that the congregation grew smaller each week.[144] Even so, in August 1863, Winslow wrote that morale was good and that the crew would all endorse the letter sent to him by his officers in the Western Flotilla upon his departure from the *Baron de Kalb* (formerly the USS *St. Louis)*.[145]

Winslow also developed a new approach to hinder the efforts of the Confederate raiders. Departing his cruising waters in the Azores in the fall of 1863, Winslow set up

patrol where the English Channel meets the Atlantic Ocean.[146] Biographer John Ellicott commended Winslow's change in tactics. With new Confederate ships being built and repaired in French and British ports, Winslow realized the raiders would eventually return for repairs.[147] When they did, Winslow would capture them in port. Winslow determined that Brest, France, would be the best cruising station.[148]

In fact, upon arriving off Brest on 17 September 1863, Winslow found the CSS *Florida* in port. However, due to international law, he had to wait for the enemy vessel to depart French territorial waters before he could intercept her. Due to the long wait, Winslow conducted several missions in search of the *Georgia,* another raider*,* along the English Channel. He also made port calls in the English towns of Queenstown and Portsmouth to search for the *Alabama*'s tender, the *Agrippina*, before returning to Brest in December 1863 to keep watch on the *Florida*.[149] Receiving information that the *Florida* needed further repairs to one of her engines, and in need of provisions himself, Winslow sailed for Cadiz on 17 January. When the *Kearsarge* returned a month later, the *Florida* was gone.[150]

Learning from this missed opportunity, Winslow adjusted. Unable to secure additional support from the Navy Department, Winslow made use of available resources and the freedom granted him by the Navy. From Paris, the U.S. Minister to France, William Dayton, had written to Winslow in November 1863, "The Department is satisfied with your zeal, and have confidence in your judgment; where it is best to cruise or what you are to do, be your own judge."[151] Winslow realized that even if he had remained off Brest, the *Florida*, which departed at two in the morning under the cover of darkness and bad weather, could have avoided him.[152] To counter this, Winslow planned

to capture his next raider, the *Rappahannock*, by cruising with his lights off. In addition, Winslow, in concert with U.S. Minister to England, Charles Francis Adams, hired a small steamer to secretly follow the *Rappahannock* and signal her departure from Calais.[153] Winslow later duplicated this approach in pursuing the *Alabama*. In that instance, he requested the assistance of the USS *St. Louis* in signaling the *Alabama*'s departure from the harbor.[154]

In December 1863, a controversy surrounding the *Kearsarge*'s port visit in Queenstown tested Winslow. This episode arose from an accusation by Confederate sympathizers in the British Parliament that the *Kearsarge* violated neutrality by hiring British crewmen. Winslow's logic and persuasiveness helped resolve a serious matter and he penned a detailed rebuttal aggressively countering the accusation. He argued that while many men at Queenstown wanted to join the crew, he turned them away. However, unknown to him, fifteen or sixteen men hid onboard when the ship pulled out to sea.[155] This response satisfied Adams.[156] However, historian William Marvel claims that Winslow, not expecting to get caught, planned the recruiting effort to replace the desertions from Brest in October 1863.[157]

Several months later, in April 1864, the issue resurfaced in Parliament and Winslow penned another rebuttal using what he called "real facts."[158] He stated he refused to bring on additional men, including Americans, since the *Kearsarge* already had a full complement of one hundred and eighty men. Furthermore, the men from Queenstown were "almost in rags" and not suitable to serve on a man-of-war.[159] Winslow even referred to the stowaways as "miserable trash."[160] On 16 December, Winslow

commented to his wife that the episode "cost [him] more writing than would fill a quire of paper."[161]

During this controversy, Winslow's intellect and communication skills helped defend his reputation, while he took actions to diffuse tensions. On 7 December 1863, he returned the "stowaways" to Queenstown and decided not to pull into Plymouth, England, to avoid further difficulties with Confederate sympathizers.[162] However, Winslow's aggressive defense also had negative consequences. It drew criticism from Minister Adams, who did not like seeing Winslow's letter published in British newspapers.[163] While Winslow conceded to Adams that his actions were "irregular," Winslow defended his right to protect his honor.[164] Despite Winslow's adamant rebuttals, historian William Marvel questions his sincerity, pointing out that the deck log contained the addition of sixteen "stowaways" the day the *Kearsarge* left port.[165] Even so, in a June 1864 letter to his wife, Winslow concluded, "I have been prudent in this affair."[166]

Winslow also confronted Adams over his insistence that Winslow seek permission before entering a British port for over twenty-four hours. Winslow cited Her Majesty's neutrality proclamation of 1 February 1862, whose provisions sanctioned his pulling into British docks for repairs. Winslow argued "the right of a ship-of-war belonging to the United States to enter any port in England for the purpose of repair."[167] When the rift with Adams reached Washington, Welles and Lincoln sided with Adams. However, they appreciated Winslow's zeal.[168] Understandably, Lincoln and Welles prioritized diplomatic relations with England over Winslow's concerns and saw that Winslow was embarrassing Adams.[169] Even so, in handling these diplomatic affairs with

logical, clear, and forceful arguments, Winslow demonstrated his confidence, communication skills, and commitment to the mission.[170]

Winslow recognized he could achieve results without accomplishing his primary mission. Despite numerous failed attempts to capture a Confederate raider, Winslow's presence in the English Channel proved beneficial to Union interests by complicating the operations of the raiders. In March 1864, while Winslow failed to find the *Georgia* and *Florida* near Cherbourg, France, his presence allowed fearful American merchant vessels to depart their ports.[171] During the same month, Winslow further alleviated merchant concerns when he informed American vessels at Dover Roads that he had cornered the *Rappahannock* in Calais.[172] In addition, in April 1864, the *Kearsarge* likely prevented the *Georgia* from meeting up with the *Rappahannock* off Calais to transfer two cannon and other material.[173] To counter the influence of the *Kearsarge*, it is possible Confederate sympathizers manufactured or exaggerated the Queenstown affair.[174] In these ways, Winslow's efforts benefited the Union cause by restricting the movements of the raiders and facilitating the flow of American commerce.

Despite the challenges of his mission, Winslow remained committed. One adversity, the weather, often proved formidable. Winslow wrote that the severity of the environmental conditions in the English Channel forced him to take shelter at various points along the coasts of England and France.[175] Winslow also had a mission that reasonably required multiple vessels. He wrote to his wife in January 1864, "One ship can't look out for three vessels, in different places."[176] Winslow also inevitably dealt with numerous false location reports. For example, upon hearing the *Alabama* was burning ships in the Azores, he arrived to find that neither the *Alabama* nor any blockade-runner

had been there for five weeks.[177] Still, Winslow aggressively acted on reports, including a trip to Tenerife in the summer of 1863, in search of a privateer in the Canary Islands.[178] Civil War historian William Marvel comments, Winslow "seemed to pursue strange vessels more diligently" than his predecessor.[179]

In addition to his tactical challenges, Winslow also faced a decline in his personal health. By 1 July 1863, the vision in his right eye was gone.[180] Not to be deterred, Winslow kept his focus, and while in the Dutch port of Flushing, he received word that the *Alabama* was in Cherbourg. He called back his crew and put to sea by nightfall.[181] Winslow then mustered his crew and informed them the *Alabama* had been found. In response, his men went wild with excitement and Winslow told them "he was going to make every effort to fight her."[182] On 13 June 1864, Winslow wrote his wife, "I want to catch Semmes."[183] The following day, the *Kearsarge* arrived in Cherbourg. Winslow brought the vessel into the harbor, but did not anchor. He then left port to take up station outside of French territorial waters. Semmes accepted the challenge and on the morning of 19 June 1864, John A. Winslow fought and won one of the great sea battles of the Civil War.

Throughout his career, Winslow consistently demonstrated the attributes and competencies of the LRM. His character, presence, and intellect enabled him to achieve the results that eventually made him an admiral, and a national hero.[184] As a junior officer, his skills helped him overcome challenging circumstances while serving in the Pacific. During the Mexican War, he demonstrated courage under fire and, in the Civil War, his dedication and expertise in command of several gunboats and then the *Kearsarge* earned him the respect and devotion of his crew. Of all his abilities,

Winslow's selfless commitment to duty, professional expertise, and ability to innovate stand out. These elements combined to make him one of America's great military leaders and warfighters.

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[106] Symonds, 68-69.

[107] Ibid., 71.

[108] Ibid., 32–35, 75.

[109] Ellicott, 145.

[110] Symonds, 77-78.

[111] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 265.

[112] Ellicott, 97.

[113] Ibid., 102.

[114] Ibid., 101.

[115] Ibid., 103.

[116] Ibid., 106-7.

[117] Ibid., 115.

[118] Ibid., 123.

[119] Ibid., 109.

[120] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 157.

[121] Ibid., 41.

[122] Ibid., 156.

[123] Ellicott, 111.

[124] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 163.

[125] Ibid., 196.

[126] Ditzel, 52.

[127] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 46.

[128] Ibid.

[129] Ibid., 96-97.

[130] Ibid., 99.

[131] Ibid., 48-49.

[132] Ibid., 80.

[133] Ibid., 84-90.

[134] Ibid. 83.

[135] Ibid., 168-69.

[136] Ibid., 197-211.

[137] Ibid., 211-12.

[138] Ibid., 214.

[139] Ibid., 240.

[140] Ellicott, 108.

[141] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 155.

[142] Ellicott, 108.

[143] Ibid., 114.

[144] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 161.

[145] Ellicott, 114.

[146] Ditzel, 53.

[147] Ellicott, 118–19.

[148] Ibid.

[149] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 200-205.

[150] Ibid., 210-15.

[151] Ellicott, 142.

[152] Ibid., 151.

[153] Ibid., 158.

[154] Ibid., 178.

[155] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 203-4.

[156] Ellicott, 128-31.

[157] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 200-201.

[158] Ellicott, 135.

[159] Ibid., 134-35.

[160] Ibid., 135.

[161] Ibid., 142.

[162] Ibid., 143.

[163] Ditzel, 54.

[164] Ellicott, 135-37.

[165] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 200-205.

[166] Ellicott, 180.

[167] Ibid., 160.

[168] Gideon Welles, "Instructions from the Secretary of the Navy to Captain Winslow, U. S. Navy, Commanding USS *Kearsarge*, Enjoining the Observance of International Courtesies in The Matter of Twenty-Four-Hour Law," April 23, 1864, United States Naval War Records Office, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion; series 1, vol 3: The Operation of the Cruisers (1 April 1864-30 December 1865).

[169] Ellicott, 166.

[170] Ibid., 163-64

[171] Ibid., 156.

[172] Ibid., 158.

[173] Ibid., 156, 162.

[174] Ibid., 156.

[175] Ibid., 157.

[176] Ibid., 150.

[177] Ibid., 110.

[178] Ibid., 111.

[179] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 165.

[180] Ellicott, 112.

[181] Ditzel, 61.

[182] Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War*, 242-243.

[183] Ellicott, 179.

[184] Ibid., 24-46.

CHAPTER 3

RAPHAEL SEMMES

Like Winslow, the career of Semmes included extensive travel and varied experiences. After joining the United States Navy at the age of seventeen, Semmes learned his profession in various theaters, and pursued a law career during his time in port. During the Mexican War, after being assigned a special mission ashore, he left blockade duty and participated in the ground offensive that conquered Mexico City. After the war, Semmes gained more experience commanding his own vessels. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he captained a converted packet ship that captured and burned U.S. merchant vessels. His success with the CSS *Sumter* led to his assignment as commander of the brand new CSS *Alabama*, one of the fastest ships afloat. It was his accomplishments on these two vessels that made Semmes a legend.

Early Career

Semmes was born in 1809 to a Roman Catholic slaveholding family in Charles County, Maryland. One of his great grandfathers, known as Lieutenant James, served in the American Revolution. He was also related to Arthur Middleton, one of the signers of the Declaration of Independence. In 1823, after his mother and father died, Semmes, along with his younger brother, moved to Georgetown, in the District of Columbia, to live under the care of his uncle. He received his education from individual tutors and also attended private schools. His uncle, who had served as an army captain during the War of 1812, taught him about the United States Constitution and the federal form of government. His uncle had also sailed to ports around the world while working for a

maritime company in his youth. Another uncle, who was often at sea, owned merchant ships based in Georgetown. The influence of family history, education, and stories of life at sea likely guided Semmes in his decision to join the U.S. Navy.[1]

In 1826 Semmes obtained an appointment as a midshipman through the help of an uncle who served in the Maryland House of Delegates. Like Winslow, Semmes trained as an apprentice at sea, since the U.S. Naval Academy was not founded until 1845. In September, Semmes reported to the USS *Lexington*, but a month later transferred to the USS *Erie*, where he served until 1829. In January 1830, he reported to the *Brandywine*, on which served until November 1831. During these tours, Semmes traveled to the West Indies, South America, and the Mediterranean. Almost forty years later, during the Civil War, Semmes returned to these waters as commander of his own ship.

During time ashore, midshipmen often received training at various navy yards and, in 1831, Semmes attended the school in Norfolk, Virginia, for three months. While on leave, he visited Cincinnati, Ohio, where he met his future wife, Anne Spencer.[2] At sea, Semmes supported officers, as they learned about navigation, mathematics, astronomy, and artillery. Semmes kept to himself and spent his free time reading history and science in addition to learning the required naval material. While fellow midshipmen described Semmes as "reserved and aloof," this outward perception concealed an inner focus.[3] In 1832, Semmes graduated second in his class at the officer board to become a passed midshipman at the age of twenty-two. The board tested midshipmen on various topics, although mathematics dominated. The next major milestone for Semmes was to reach lieutenant by the age of thirty.[4]

During leave periods, Semmes studied law. His brother, Samuel, also pursued a law career, and Semmes, when ashore, would study law at his brother's practice in Cumberland, Maryland.[5] He joined the Maryland bar in 1835, at the age of twenty-six, and in July reported for service in the Second Seminole War and served on the frigate, *Constellation*. The following year, he received command of the *Lt. Izard*, a steam-powered riverboat, for transporting troops and supplies. Being trusted with command of a vessel was a promising sign for an officer's career. However, during a night reconnaissance on the Withlacoochee River in Florida, Semmes abandoned the vessel after it ran aground. An investigation cleared Semmes and, a few months later, in March 1837, he achieved the rank of lieutenant, at the age of twenty-seven.[6]

Achieving lieutenant included a pay raise and two months later Semmes married Anne. They eventually had six children together. Between 1840 and 1845, Semmes commanded three ships, conducting survey work and lighthouse inspections along the Gulf Coast. During this time, Semmes operated out of Pensacola, Florida, and Anne joined him there. They rented a house in nearby Alabama and Semmes considered himself a citizen of his new adopted state. His ties to Alabama would influence his decision to leave the U.S. Navy for the Confederacy twenty years later.[7]

Mexican War

In July 1846, Semmes transferred to the USS *Cumberland*, the flagship of the thirteen-ship blockading fleet operating off the coast of Mexico. Semmes served as Commodore David Conner's flag officer and boarding officer. However, Mexico had nether a fleet nor significant seaborne commerce, and Semmes did not like playing the

role of "idle spectator."[8] Like Winslow, he wanted to be more involved in the war effort, and when given the opportunity, took action.

In October 1846, Semmes gained command of the brig *Somers*, one of the blockade ships. It had the reputation as a "bad luck" ship, as three mutineers from the ship had been hanged and buried at sea in 1842.[9] The *Somers* was a small 266-ton vessel only 103 feet in length and 25 feet wide, with a crew of about ninety men.[10] After patrolling off Vera Cruz during the day, Semmes sailed the *Somers* in close to shore at night. During one of these operations, eight of his men burned the Mexican merchant brig, *Creole*, in the harbor.[11] Another time, Semmes approved a mission to reconnoiter a potential powder magazine. In an attempt to find a path from which they could assault the building, a team of men landed over a period of three nights.[12] However, on the third night, they were discovered and Mexican forces captured two of the men.[13]

Two months later, greater misfortune struck. With the mast towering 130 feet above the deck, the *Somers* was top heavy. In December, a squall overwhelmed the ship, sinking it in only ten minutes. During this tragedy, Semmes saw men drowning. As he attempted to survive by swimming ashore, a rescue boat saved him.[14] Semmes lost thirty-nine members of his seventy-six-man crew.[15] Afterward, a Court of Inquiry exonerated him.[16] While Semmes had noticed the oncoming squall, the weather hit the ship before the crew had time to execute his orders.[17] He wrote in his memoirs, "No human foresight could have guarded against, or prevented, [the] sad catastrophe."[18]

This was the second ship Semmes lost in his career, and this time, it cost the lives of many men. However, the resilient Semmes bounced back. He transferred to the *Raritan*, where he shared a cabin with another junior officer, John A. Winslow, who had

just lost the *Morris*, after it smashed into a reef.[19] During this time, the two men encouraged one another. Ironically, almost twenty years later, on the other side of the Atlantic, the two men met again, but under very different circumstances.

During the war, Semmes also participated in operations against two Mexican towns. To help the Army attack Vera Cruz in March 1847, the Navy landed twelve thousand soldiers. They also offloaded six Navy guns with two hundred men per gun, dragging them three miles into position on 23 March. Semmes helped man one of the Navy artillery batteries firing on one of the city walls. In two days, the Navy fired one thousand shells and eight hundred shot while losing five men. The city surrendered on 28 March. However, Semmes disagreed with the Army's decision to fire mortars over the walls, causing death to civilians and damage to their property. He wrote, "Humanity in the present century revolts at the destruction of private property and the unnecessary effusion of blood."[20] Semmes believed a better option would have been to construct batteries and attack the military defenders.[21]

Semmes also participated in the naval operation to capture the town of Tuspan on 18 April, before being ordered by Commodore Matthew Perry, ten days later, to accompany Major General Winfield Scott's army in its advance on Mexico City.[22] Perry wanted Lieutenant Semmes to secure the release of one of his men from the *Somers*, who had been captured during the nighttime reconnaissance raid.[23] However, when Semmes reported to Scott, the commander of U.S. forces told him he could return to the Navy. Semmes, not interested in returning to monotonous blockade duty, remained with the Army and became an aide to Major General William Worth.[24] He then participated in the rout of the Mexicans at San Antonio, Mexico, in August 1847 and the fight for

Churubusco, which brought the Army to within four miles of Mexico City on 20 August 1847.[25]

Scott then decided to use Semmes, who spoke Spanish, as a secretary and interpreter for the negotiations of Tacubaya. However, following ceasefire violations by General Santa Anna, the truce ended two weeks later.[26] During the subsequent fighting, Semmes manned a mountain-howitzer on the roof of a San Cosme church alongside Lieutenant Ulysses S. Grant in September 1847.[27] Afterward, he wrote, "A merciful Providence had conducted us in safety, through many hard-fought battles to the ancient and renowned city of Mexico."[28] For Semmes, his desire to see action came to fruition, and, like Winslow, he distinguished himself during ground combat. In fact, Major General Worth commended his bravery on several occasions.[29] In addition to maintaining detailed records of the conflict, Semmes also observed the culture and climate of Mexico. He later turned his journal into a bestselling memoir titled, *Service Afloat and Ashore During The Mexican War*, which was published in 1851.[30]

Interwar Period

During the interwar period, Semmes commanded the USS *Electra*, a 340-ton supply ship, where he faced challenges similar to Winslow's during his time in the Pacific. The *Electra* supplied other ships at sea and transported men and supplies back to Florida from the Mexican theater. Not only was the mission dull, low pay and challenging living conditions made life at sea difficult.[31] In the Navy enlisted crewmen often lived paycheck to paycheck, which did not always attract the best talent. Strict discipline by the officers was often necessary to maintain good order and discipline. Semmes held his crew accountable for their actions, and in "one forty-two-day period,

Semmes ordered no fewer than sixteen floggings, ranging in severity from two lashes to twelve."[32] However, despite the apparent supreme authority of naval captains, Semmes soon showed he understood the limitations of his office.

In October 1849, Semmes moved his family to Mobile, Alabama, to give his children better schooling. He requested three months of leave for the move and the Navy complied due to an abundance of officers. During this period the Navy did not have a retirement system to encourage or force senior officers to leave the ranks. For Semmes, the break turned into a six-year period of civilian life, where he supported his family by practicing law in Mobile. He also used his legal abilities in his service to the Navy.[33] When four midshipmen from the USS *Albany* faced court martial for insubordination, Semmes provided them legal defense. One of the midshipmen, John Kell, later became his loyal executive officer on the *Sumter* and *Alabama.*[34]

CSS *Sumter*

At the dawn of the Civil War, Semmes and all three of his children joined the Southern cause, while his wife and brother sided with the North.[35] This is understandable considering his children grew up in Southern states and received schooling in the South. Semmes viewed secession as a just act against the Northern states, which he believed were economically oppressing the South.[36] To him, the policies of the North endangered Southern property, including their slaves, "under a general system of robbery."[37] Applying his legal mind, Semmes committed over five chapters to the cause of the Civil War in *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States,* published in 1868.[38] In 1861, despite being over fifty years old, Semmes informed the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Stephen Mallory, that he wanted to go to sea.[39] Similar to others,

Semmes recognized that one of the North's vulnerabilities was its reliance on seaborne trade.[40] Mallory agreed and commissioned Semmes as the South's first commerce raider.

Semmes needed confidence, expertise, and innovation just to get the *Sumter* ready for sea. The *Sumter,* built in Philadelphia in 1859, was purchased by the Confederacy in New Orleans in April 1861. While the small, 500-ton packet ship could carry four or five guns and achieve a speed of five to ten knots, it could only carry five days worth of fuel and lacked the crew accommodations of a warship.[41] In fact, a board of naval officers in New Orleans condemned the vessel, dismissing its value. Nonetheless, Semmes saw potential and said to Mallory, "Give me that ship."[42]

To convert the vessel from a merchant vessel into a raider, Semmes oversaw extensive modifications. He wrote, "I had not only to devise all the alterations but to make plans, and drawings of them, before they could be comprehended."[43] These changes took two months to complete, and on 30 May 1861, Semmes wrote, "My patience is sorely tried by the mechanics."[44] The longer it took, the more Federal warships would likely appear offshore. Semmes faced the possibility of failing before he even started his mission.

Semmes oversaw the recruitment of his enlisted crew. In the busy seaport of New Orleans, Semmes did not have difficulties finding men who could operate a ship. Mostly from America, England, Ireland, and Germany, the sailors moved from ship to ship and port to port. They made their living on the next ride that offered them work. Despite their international background, they all spoke the same language of sailing.[45] Interestingly, even though she sailed out of New Orleans, most of the *Sumter*'s crewmembers were English and Irish.[46]

To fill the officer ranks, Mallory appointed nine officers and one midshipman. Many of these officers would later serve with Semmes on the *Alabama*. Of the officers, Semmes likely requested Kell, who he had met before the war. Kell was a passionate Southerner from Georgia and Semmes made him second in command. Lieutenant Robert Chapman, the second lieutenant, was from Alabama, while Lieutenants John Stribling and William Evans hailed from South Carolina. Stribling, as the third lieutenant, was Kell's right hand man, and Evans was the fourth lieutenant. Lieutenant Becket Howell, the marine officer, was a brother-in-law of President Jefferson Davis.[47] At the conclusion of the *Sumter*'s cruise, Semmes showed that he recognized the competency of his officers. He lamented that some of his lieutenants were worthy of their own command, but due to a shortage of Confederate vessels, they would never get the opportunity.[48]

Semmes wrote that he and his men shared a common Christian faith that helped bind them together.[49] After the war, Kell wrote that he believed God had His reasons for the defeat of the South and that despite the loss, the Confederates still had "hope in God."[50] He also wrote about his relationship to Semmes, "Our friendship was life-long, and I trust will be eternal!"[51] This close bond was critical to success. As captain, Semmes "remained aloof, unapproachable, and almost godlike."[52] This typical role of a sea commander meant Kell, not Semmes, was the most senior officer to directly interact with the crew. For this reason, Kell's ability to lead was essential to the success of Semmes.[53] Semmes believed Kell also had a high regard for discipline and Kell soon proved him right.[54]

To train his men, Semmes took the *Sumter* down the Mississippi between Fort Jackson and Fort St. Philip for three days of drills.[55] While satisfied with their

performance, Semmes realized they were not skilled at gunnery. However, a short time later, in June 1861, Semmes was satisfied with his ship and remained confident in Kell.[56] He recalled later, "How much a little discipline could accomplish, in the course of a few weeks."[57] Later that year, in December 1861, a nighttime fire onboard tested the crew's discipline while out at sea. Responding to the alarm, a midshipman found a prisoner's mattress on fire and smothered it. Semmes wrote, "[There was] no panic on board the *Sumter*," as "discipline keeps all the passions and emotions under control."[58] While Semmes trusted his crew, he did not fully delegate the critical task of navigation. Throughout the cruise, he took his own chronometer observations, knowing that ultimate responsibility for the ship rested with him.[59]

In the *Sumter*'s daring escape through the Federal blockade, Semmes foreshadowed his coming exploits. To first navigate the hazardous waters at the mouth of the Mississippi, Semmes needed a pilot. Due to the questionable loyalty of the local pilots, Semmes told one of them that if he ran the ship aground or gave them into "the hands of the enemy he would swing him to the yardarm as a traitor."[60] To prepare for running the blockade, Semmes kept his fires going. Meanwhile, the USS *Brooklyn* patrolled offshore. The *Brooklyn* was one of five screw sloops funded by Congress in 1857 with two propellers.[61] On the *Sumter*, one of the lieutenants, who had served on the *Brooklyn*, notified Semmes that the Federal vessel could do fourteen knots. The officer also added, "There is no possible chance of our escaping that ship."[62] This assessment did not deter Semmes.

On the morning of 29 June 1861, a pilot noticed the *Brooklyn* was gone. Within a few minutes, Semmes was underway. However, after steaming four miles, the *Sumter*

sighted the *Brooklyn*, which had moved seven miles out of position in pursuit of another vessel.[63] The *Brooklyn* tried to close the gap, and when the distance between the two vessels closed to four miles, Semmes feared his lieutenant might be right.[64] In an effort to increase speed, Semmes jettisoned a small howitzer and fifteen hundred gallons of water.[65] He then skillfully used his secondary means of propulsion, the wind, to out sail the *Brooklyn*. After three and a half hours and a distance of forty miles, the *Brooklyn* fired a gun as a parting shot and gave up the chase.[66] The *Sumter* was free. For Semmes, his calculated risk paid off. In the age of hybrid ships, both steam and wind power factored into propulsion. Not only did Semmes escape the Yankees, he delivered his crew from the swarms of mosquitoes that plagued them in the Mississippi delta. The achievement, the first daring exploit of Semmes during the war, instilled confidence in the crew and helped build trust in their commanding officer.[67]

Several incidents from his time on the *Sumter* reveal the character of Semmes. Before the ship's escape from New Orleans, one of the enlisted sailors died in a drowning accident. In response, Semmes sent a letter to the man's father. He wrote, "I offer you, my dear sir, my heartfelt condolence on this sad bereavement."[68] Semmes also cared for non-crewmembers. After taking his first prize, the *Golden Rocket*, on 3 July 1861, Semmes brought his captors onboard the *Sumter* and provided them food and rations. He wrote, "We were making war upon the enemy's commerce, but not upon his unarmed seamen."[69] At Fort de France, Martinique, in November 1861, Semmes even mustered his prisoners on deck and inquired about their treatment. According to Semmes, all of them said they had been well treated and even thanked him for his kindness.[70]

Semmes prioritized ethical conduct, and his faith in God caused him to see things in black and white. He recorded that, to his knowledge, no personal belongings of any prisoner was ever taken by his crew.[71] In describing the war, he wrote, "Our struggle must be just and holy in His sight, and He governs the world by inexorable laws of right and wrong, the wicked and cruel people who are seeking our destruction cannot fail to be beaten back and destroyed."[72] In addition, while Semmes did not preach to his crew like Winslow, he sometimes attended church while in port. For example, in Fort de France, he attended Governor's mass and in Gibraltar he attended a Catholic church.[73]

After escaping the *Brooklyn*, the *Sumter* achieved rapid success, capturing seven prizes in two days. As a result, Semmes pulled into Cuba with a small fleet in July 1861, and penned a letter to the governor of Cienfuegos explaining international law as it applied to his prizes and their cargo.[74] While Semmes correctly assumed the governor would forward the message to the Spanish government, he miscalculated the response.[75] The Spanish decided to return the prizes to their original owners, shocking Semmes. After this, the burning of prizes became routine policy.

After leaving Cuba, Semmes pulled the *Sumter* into the harbor of St. Anne's in Curacao for refueling in July 1861. However, the Dutch colony did not want the belligerent vessel to enter. In response, Semmes penned another letter explaining international law and sent it ashore with Lieutenant Chapman.[76] While the Dutch held a council to determine their response, Semmes added emphasis to his prose by commencing gun practice. After a few eight-inch shells crossed the window of the council proceedings, Chapman returned with approval.[77]

Semmes employed methods of deception to achieve success. While in port in Curacao, Semmes made efforts to mislead the enemy by sharing false information. He told the pilot and several other men that he planned to return to Cuba, hoping this information would reach the U.S. Navy and misdirect any pursuing warships.[78] When Semmes later boarded several neutral vessels returning to the West Indies from Brazil, he raised the American flag on the *Sumter*. He hoped the ships would not question his colors and conclude the *Sumter* was a Federal vessel. In these ways, Semmes sought to conceal his location and future intentions.[79]

In Saint Pierre, Martinique, in November 1861, Semmes skillfully escaped the USS *Iroquois*, one of the six ships Gideon Welles sent after the *Sumter*. After Semmes pulled into port, the Federal warship arrived off the coast on 14 November. The *Iroquois* had more men and guns than the *Sumter* and planned to capture Semmes if he tried to leave and entered international waters. The *Iroquois* was a new class of warship designed to rely more on steam power than wind power.[80] Semmes observed the situation and waited for the right moment, as he had done with the *Brooklyn*. Semmes judged that another boat in the harbor was acting as a lookout and would signal the *Iroquois* of his departure. On the night of 23 November, the *Sumter*, with all its lights off, departed to the south. When the *Iroquois* pursued, Semmes changed direction, easily escaping to the north. The *Iroquois* was the second Federal warship that had an opportunity to catch Semmes and missed.[81]

During his time on the *Sumter*, Semmes, like Winslow, faced challenges maintaining the commitment and motivation of his crew. While Semmes had the advantage of picking his own men, life at sea and port temptations frequently tested good

order and discipline.[82] The conditions on the *Sumter* sometimes reached the U.S. Navy via intermediaries, who were typically released prisoners, deserters, or other informants. For example, in October 1861, Commander David D. Porter informed the flag officer of the Gulf Blockading Squadron that the 106 men on the *Sumter* were disciplined but "discontented," and that fifteen of them were in irons.[83]

To lead his men, Semmes combined accountability with empathy. During Sunday musters, the reading of the Articles of War reminded the men of the captain's authority, which could be backed by the death sentence.[84] Semmes wrote that offences should be punished with "promptitude" and "certainty," but not with "severity."[85] He commended himself for this approach, recording in December 1861 that this policy "had already performed marvels."[86] Semmes reflected at the end of the cruise that he led his crew with a "rigid hand, never overlooking an offence."[87]

Semmes, like other naval captains, experienced trouble with desertions. Enlisted seamen often moved from port to port seeking work on different ships as opportunities arose. They typically prioritized paychecks over loyalties. While in port in Curacao, off the coast of Venezuela, one of *Sumter's* men deserted and joined the crew of a Union vessel. Semmes blamed this on the influence of Federal officials and a businessman from Boston. Semmes called the sailor a traitor, but also noted his satisfaction that of all his men, only one did not return.[88] In Cadiz, Spain, in January 1862, six men deserted.[89] This time, Semmes blamed the vices of Spain and pointed out that his enlisted crew consisted of less than six Southern-born men.[90]

Some deserters even joined enemy warships, serving on the USS *Tuscarora* and the USS *Kearsarge*.[91] After deserting the *Sumter*, they simply offered their services to

other takers. In fact, while in Gibraltar later that month, Semmes noted that his crew would converse, laugh, and smoke with Federal crewmembers as if no war existed. However, he also pointed out, if they were in international waters, they would readily fight. Semmes wrote, "These boats' crews could probably have been exchanged, without much detriment to each other's flag."[92] At Gibraltar, after deciding to lay up the *Sumter*, Semmes dismissed most of his men. If he received command of another ship, he would rebuild his crew. In the meantime, Semmes and Kell traveled to London, England on a commercial vessel to determine their next move, arriving in April 1862.[93]

Semmes achieved results as a commerce raider by effectively balancing the need to damage Northern commerce, while not antagonizing neutral nations. Due to the need to keep third parties out of the war, or engender their sympathy for the Southern cause, Semmes adopted a ransom bond approach to deal with ships carrying neutral cargo. For example, he forced the captain of the *Montmorency*, which carried English cargo, to sign a bond before he released the crew.[94] This agreement meant the North would have to pay the Confederacy the amount of the ship and cargo after the war. Of course, the South would have to win the war to reap the benefits of this tactic.[95]

For Semmes, even if he believed the cargo was not actually neutral, more aggressive action risked turning foreign nations against the South. Still, Semmes required sufficient evidence to prove neutrality, since he expected merchant owners to employ aggressive measures to protect their profits. If the papers lacked an official consul's stamp, he would burn the cargo with the ship. Semmes made these decisions himself, as he learned from the Cuba incident that he could not risk taking his prizes into port and allow a third party to arbitrate.[96] In addition to bonding and burning vessels, Semmes also

tried to send a captured vessel to the Confederacy. From Puerto Cabello, Venezuela, Semmes detached part of his crew with a prize vessel, the *Abby Bradford,* in July 1861. Attempting to reach New Orleans, the mission failed when Federal warships captured the ship off Louisiana. This reinforced the idea that burning captured vessels was the best policy.[97]

Semmes also kept detailed records so he could aggressively challenge accusations of neutrality violations. For example, in Gibraltar, after the Spanish claimed he burned the *Neapolitan* in the territorial waters of Cueta, Semmes produced the testimony of the *Neapolitan's* captain. He also provided eyewitness statements from those on shore that put the distance at nine miles from the island.[98] Semmes understood that maintaining and increasing the support of neutral powers was a top priority for the Confederate war effort.

In his endeavor to repair the *Sumter* in Europe, Semmes faced several challenges. Upon arriving in Cadiz on 3 January 1862, the local authorities corresponded with Madrid and ordered Semmes to depart in twenty-four hours. In response, Semmes penned a persuasive and forceful rebuttal. In his letter, he cited the rights of a belligerent to pull into port, no matter whether the belligerent's government was *de facto* or *de jure*. He also pointed out his ship's state of disrepair and that he could not comply with the order. Furthermore, Semmes harbored forty-three prisoners, from four captures between 26 November and 8 December.[99] Due to their discomfort, he sought to release the prisoners to the U.S. Consul.[100]

While his argument worked, further delays in funding and continued pressure from the government, forced Semmes to leave Cadiz for Gibraltar. However, more troubles ensued there. In addition to the *Sumter's* deteriorating boilers and the presence of

three Union warships, Semmes could not refuel due to the U.S. Consul, which had pressured the government and the merchants not to provide the *Sumter* with coal. Consequently, Semmes abandoned his ship in February 1862.[101]

During his time on the *Sumter*, Semmes achieved significant results. He captured his first ship off Cuba on 3 July 1861, and set it aflame that night. Additional successes in the Caribbean fomented Northern anger and the press denounced him as a pirate. From Puerto Cabello, on 26 July, Semmes wrote a letter to Mallory reporting that he had captured nine vessels in twenty-six days.[102] While the priority of Gideon Welles remained the blockade, public pressure forced him to dispatch ships to chase raiders.[103] The Union response impacted Semmes and, while off South America, he admitted to having concerns after spotting a possible Federal warship.[104]

The *Sumter's* burning of ships also had secondary effects. Rising insurance rates curtailed American commercial profits.[105] In addition, merchant owners sold their ships to foreign powers, while vessels that chose to risk capture often sought new sea-lanes.[106] Semmes blamed this re-routing for his lack of prizes off Brazil.[107] Semmes also noted that it was unusual that no American ships were part of the commercial fleet that he encountered near Gibraltar. Even so, Semmes did capture his first contraband vessel, the *Neapolitan*, within sight of the rock, and burned it.[108] Contraband was material that directly supported the war effort. Near Gibraltar, Semmes also ransomed another captured vessel.[109]

Overall, during the six-month cruise, Semmes recorded capturing seventeen ships, with the cost of running the *Sumter* equal to the least valuable prize.[110] Kell later wrote about the *Sumter*, "Frail and unseaworthy at best, her career was a marvel. In the hands of

a commander as daring as any Viking in seamanship, she swept the waters of the Caribbean Sea as she moved silently on her careers of triumph."[111] Indeed, Semmes saw potential in a vessel that others did not, and turned a small packet ship into one of the unlikely Southern success stories of the war.

CSS *Alabama*

The selection of Semmes to command the *Alabama* proved fortuitous for the Confederacy. While Mallory had promised command to James Bulloch, the Confederate agent in England who had overseen its construction, Mallory changed his mind due to Bulloch's connections and success in getting ships built in neutral England. While American officials suspected the *Florida* and *Alabama* were meant for the Confederacy, they were unable to get English officials to intervene.[112] At the time, the brand new *Alabama*, launched from the Liverpool shipyards, was one of the fastest ships on the high seas.[113] To Semmes, she was "a perfect steamer and a perfect sailing-ship, at the same time, neither of her two modes of locomotion being at all dependent upon the other."[114] In fifteen minutes, the propeller could be retracted into the hull and out of the water.[115]

The bold captain of the *Sumter* now had a ship to complement his talents. Semmes understood the responsibility entrusted to him. He concealed his plans from everyone and, as he did on the *Sumter*, took his own celestial sightings for navigation.[116] If the Confederacy ever debated the wisdom of investing in the *Alabama*, or its subsequent selection of Semmes to command her, any doubts were likely soon extinguished. It took Semmes only ten prizes to cover the two hundred and fifty thousand dollar cost of the *Alabama*.[117] Moreover, the impressive start proved to be merely the

beginning. In capturing sixty-two American vessels between September 1862 and June 1864, Semmes achieved greater success than any other Confederate ship captain.

Semmes filled his officer ranks with loyal Southerners.[118] He brought with him thirteen men who had served with him on the *Sumter.*[119] Though he had only three years at the U.S. Naval Academy in Annapolis, nineteen-year old Richard Armstrong, from Georgia, was subordinate only to Semmes and Kell.[120] Another Naval Academy lieutenant, twenty-year-old Joseph Wilson, was from Florida. Semmes later commended Wilson for his intelligence and character.[121] Since these men were so young, Semmes relied primarily on Kell, his second in command, who was, according to Semmes, "an excellent disciplinarian, and . . . a thorough master of his profession."[122] For his fourth lieutenant, Semmes chose Arthur Sinclair, from Virginia, whom he also commended for his intelligence.[123] The *Alabama*'s fifth lieutenant, John Low, was a Georgian.[124]

During the first week onboard, while in the Azores, Semmes suspended one of his engineers for ignoring an order from Kell.[125] This likely set the tone and, thereafter, Semmes rarely experienced problems from his officers. However, after an incident in Port Royal, Jamaica, in January 1863, Semmes discharged his paymaster, who had contacted the U.S. Consul and spent ship funds on himself.[126] The paymaster was the only officer to defect from the *Sumter* and *Alabama.*[127] In fact, in relating this incident, Semmes proudly stated, "[He was] the only recruit the enemy ever got from the ranks of my officers."[128]

Semmes also effectively recruited and motivated his enlisted crew. After construction in Liverpool, England, the brand new *Alabama* left port for "sea trials," but never returned. The sudden departure in August 1862 prevented British officials from

seizing the vessel for violation of neutrality. The ship headed for the Azores, where it rendezvoused with a tender to outfit her with the weapons of war. While there, Semmes commissioned the *Alabama* and, with the band playing "Dixie," he anxiously addressed his potential crew.[129] In the only "stump speech" Semmes ever made, he spoke to the mostly English and Irish seamen, "There is a chance which seldom offers itself to a British seaman – to make a little money . . . Your prize money will be divided proportionately, according to each man's rank."[130] While the lure of prize money proved a false hope, at the time it seemed reasonable to a group of mostly unmarried men needing work from the docks of England.

Even so, not all the *Alabama's* crewmembers were young and destitute. Michael Mars was in his forties and two British were naval veterans who received pensions from the English government. In addition to prize money, Semmes promised twice the pay of the British Navy, paid out in gold.[131] In addition, the allure of adventure and liberty in foreign lands might have intrigued some men.[132] Instead of selling captured vessels, Semmes opted to burn them instead. For this reason, while the crew did experience adventure, the only prize money they ever saw came from "the sale of captured chronometers" at the end of the cruise in 1864.[133] The chronometer, invented in the mid-18th century, allowed a ship to accurately calculate longitude and was a valuable item during this era.

Another recruiting tactic employed by Semmes was leveraging the influence of George Harwood, a Royal Navy Reservist from Liverpool. Once he agreed to serve Semmes for six months as chief boatswain's mate in August 1862, his influence encouraged younger seamen to sign on.[134] In addition to Harwood, eight other men had

served in the British Naval Reserves and Semmes promised them British port calls every three months. This proved another unfulfilled promise.[135] However, at the time, on 24 August 1862, the persuasiveness of Semmes convinced over eighty men to serve on the *Alabama.*[136] In fact, only ten men from the "sea trial" returned to England.[137]

Semmes continued recruitment efforts throughout the cruise. The demands and uncertainties of life at sea and the allure of ports made this a typical practice for naval captains. Semmes added men from captured vessels, as well as from his own tender, which would rendezvous with the *Alabama* from time to time to bring fuel and supplies. After seizing the *Benjamin Tucker*, an American whaler, on 14 September 1862, Semmes added a Dutchman to his roll.[138] For the sailor, service on the *Alabama* seemed a better option than being dropped on shore in the Azores.[139] Later that month, while still in the Azores, Semmes added a German recruit from another captured vessel.[140] Off Newfoundland in October, the *Alabama* added four more English recruits.[141] With the capture of the *T. B. Wales*, Semmes gained eleven more recruits and by 9 November 1862, he almost had a full crew.[142] In the West Indies later that month, after meeting up with the *Agrippina*, Semmes sent four ill crewmen home and replaced them with three men from the tender.[143] In March 1863, captured vessels provided another ten sailors.[144] However, in South Africa, desertions forced Semmes to bring on thirteen "vagabonds" as replacements.[145] In Singapore, Semmes added four more men, including Henry Higgins, from "Her Majesty's Indian Navy."[146] In this way, Semmes maintained the *Alabama* as a fully functioning warship.

During the cruise, Semmes largely remained socially isolated from his crew. For example, during a refueling stop at the island of Blanquilla, off Venezuela, Semmes

explored the island alone in his captain's boat.[147] He also frequently dined alone and used Kell as his link to the crew.[148] This private approach likely helped Semmes retain his authority. According to historian William Marvel, he fulfilled the reputation that naval captains were "aloof, unapproachable, and almost godlike."[149] While Semmes, like Winslow, maintained an effective presence, he had a different style.

Interestingly, Semmes wrote in his memoirs that he grew weary of the discipline and isolation and looked for opportunities to escape.[150] One of these opportunities came while in port in Bahia, Brazil, in May 1863. Semmes and some of his officers joined some of the men from the CSS *Georgia,* another commerce raider*,* for an inland excursion.[151] Semmes also hosted visitors on the *Alabama*, and frequently met with officials during port calls.[152] This was common for naval officers in the 19th century, who were often the only American officials to represent the United States in many foreign ports. In Bahia, he also attended a ball with some of his men.[153]

Semmes kept order and discipline through a keen understanding of human nature. He believed that "man is a poor, weak creature, selfish and corrupt, guided by the instincts and inspirations of the moment."[154] For this reason, he limited his time in port, which helped keep his men focused, drilled, and disciplined.[155] Onboard ship, his officers always wore pistols on deck.[156] In addition, during Sunday musters the *Alabama* mirrored the *Kearsarge's* practice of reading the Articles of War following uniform and boat inspection. The Articles of War authorized the captain to determine punishments for offences, including death.[157] These measures allowed Semmes to rule his ship like an absolute monarch.[158] This was not unique among naval sea captains. A man who

committed a violation was typically put in irons. If necessary, a court-martial would convene within twenty-four hours.[159]

Even so, the majority of the *Alabama's* crew received positive incentives. Semmes stated that the "willing and obedient were treated with humanity and kindness."[160] In addition, Semmes praised good behavior, authorized liberty or limited workdays, and rationed alcohol. In February 1864, after crewman Mars jumped into the water to save a man who had fallen overboard off Mozambique, Semmes commended his actions in front of the crew.[161] In granting liberty, Semmes realized the benefit to morale outweighed the risk of desertion.[162] Even after the decisive, thirteen-minute victory over the *Hatteras* in January 1863, seven men deserted in the next port call of Port Royal, Jamaica.

Semmes took other measures to maintain order. As much as possible, he attempted to keep Sundays free of labor.[163] Semmes also rewarded his men with two servings of "grog" per day. However, he understood the dangers of alcohol and aimed to control drinking. In fact, he allowed no liquor to be taken from captured vessels.[164] This aligned with his policy of no indiscriminate looting. However, Semmes did seize any necessary supplies.[165] Through these measures, Semmes successfully maintained order and discipline.

Despite this success, several incidents tested Semmes's authority. In October 1862, Semmes reduced a crewman to the rank of seaman, after he twice got drunk from a prize vessel's liquor.[166] In Martinique in November 1862, Semmes's quick reaction suppressed a small rebellion. After smuggling alcohol onboard, an inebriated crewmember persuaded a group of men to attempt to take over the ship with knives and

belaying-pins. Semmes quickly sounded the call for quarters and, out of habit, the men stumbled to their stations. Armed officers soon gained control. Semmes then walked the decks and identified twenty drunken men worthy of irons. He then punished the leaders by dowsing them with buckets of water, until they had trouble breathing. In response, they begged Semmes to spare their lives.[167] Later that month, Semmes discharged one of the men in disgrace on the island of Blanquilla.[168]

In another incident, after a port visit in Jamaica in January 1863, Semmes held hearings and accused two crewmen of attempted murder and desertion. After frightening them, he ordered the master at arms to set them free.[169] In Brazil in May 1863, Semmes again faced several desertions and one officer failed to return from liberty on time, which earned him a week confined to his stateroom.[170] In South Africa in August 1863, one of the crew pulled a knife on another. Semmes punished him with three months of solitary confinement followed by a discharge.[171]

Later that month, twenty more desertions occurred in Simon's Town, South Africa. The nine days in port, and news of the Confederate setbacks at Gettysburg and Vicksburg, might have influenced the men's decision. Semmes blamed the entreaties of the U.S. Consul for enticing his men and for prohibiting local authorities from returning them to the ship.[172] It is also possible the crew lost confidence they would ever see any prize money. In fact, after Semmes sold their latest capture, the *Sea Bride*, the crew received nothing.[173] Instead, Semmes applied the money to funding the next leg of the *Alabama's* voyage. A buyer in Cape Town bought the wool cargo and paid three thousand five hundred pounds for the ship.[174]

Another incident occurred in the East Indies in November 1863. On the thirteenth, following a capture near the Sundra Strait, Semmes rewarded the crew with cigars. However, still evidently upset for not having seen any money from the *Sea Bride,* several men threw them overboard.[175] In response, Semmes arrested the ringleaders, declaring them guilty of "mutinous and seditious conduct." As punishment, Semmes reduced their rank, stopped their pay for three months, and put them in irons for thirty days with only bread and water.[176] Then, during the return trip to South Africa, at Johanna, in the Comoro Islands, in February 1864, four men tried to desert, but were captured. In response, Semmes demoted them and withheld a month's pay.[177] Just as he had on the *Sumter*, Semmes effectively maintained order by swiftly punishing infractions.

Throughout the cruise, Semmes kept his movements unpredictable, adjusted to circumstances, and realized that frequent port visits would reveal his location. Since he only carried an eighteen-day supply of coal, Semmes primarily relied on wind propulsion. In fact, he captured all but six vessels while under sail.[178] With limited ability to communicate with Richmond, Semmes had near total freedom. In September 1862, after early success capturing whalers in the Azores, Semmes headed west, toward Newfoundland, to capture vessels filled with grain.[179] While contemplating a move on New York in October 1862, Semmes learned from newspapers that Welles had dispatched several ships to search for him and that the North Atlantic Blockading Squadron was aware of his nearby presence. Consequently, with only four days supply of coal remaining, Semmes sailed south to rendezvous with his resupply vessel, the *Agrippina*, in the Caribbean.[180] After achieving more success, including the sinking of the USS *Hatteras* off Galveston, Semmes headed for the waters off Brazil, a location he

referred to as "the great turning-point of the commerce of the world."[181] In Fernando de Noronha, a Brazilian penal colony, the *Agrippina* failed to rendezvous, and Semmes adjusted by refueling with coal from captured vessels.[182]

When Semmes arrived in Martinique in November 1862, he realized the captain of the *Agrippina* failed to conceal his mission from the locals. Realizing spies could inform American officials, Semmes immediately ordered the ship to a new rendezvous, the barely inhabited island of Blanquilla. Semmes had visited this secluded location during his time in the U.S. Navy.[183] Sure enough, the next morning, the USS *San Jacinto* arrived at Fort de France, Martinique. Fortunately for Semmes, the *Agrippina* was gone, and since the Federal warship carried fourteen eleven-inch guns, Semmes decided to avoid battle. Just as he had avoided the *Iroquois* while on the *Sumter*, Semmes used the cover of night and a light rain to conceal the *Alabama*'s departure.[184]

To prevent further undesired encounters with Federal warships, Semmes used information from newspapers taken from captured vessels. For example, in late 1862, the *New York Herald* gave him the positions and missions of Union warships.[185] He also used such information to plan operations. While orchestrating his venture against the Federal expedition on Galveston in January 1863, Semmes gained confidence from news reports that the North believed he was heading to Brazil and the East Indies.[186] To his surprise, when Semmes later arrived in Brazil, there were no Federal warships in the area.[187]

Another way Semmes avoided capture was by calculating the timing of his movements against expected actions by the enemy. For example, after Semmes disembarked prisoners from captured vessels, he would estimate the number of days it

would take for the news to reach Washington. He then determined the likely arrival time of a Federal warship to his location.[188] After three months in Brazil from April to June 1863, he sailed for South Africa and then the East Indies, not willing to risk a longer stay. Surprisingly, when Semmes arrived in South Africa on 28 July 1863, he learned that no Federal warship had been there in months.[189] In addition, while in the East Indies from October to December 1863, only one Federal warship patrolled the waters. Surprisingly, during the *Alabama*'s twenty-two month cruise from September 1862 to June 1864, Semmes experienced no unplanned encounters with the enemy.

During the cruise, Semmes showed his character in several ways. Semmes prioritized the well-being of his crew and did not lose a single crewmember or prisoner to disease.[190] He also treated the enemy with dignity and respect. While he put the captured crews of his first seven or eight vessels in irons, he justified the action as a response to the arrest of the *Sumter's* paymaster in Morocco.[191] After Semmes took the passenger vessel, *Tonawanda*, in October 1862, he released the ship under bond, partly because thirty of the sixty passengers were women and children.[192]

When Semmes took prisoners from the *Thomas B. Wales* in November 1862, he allowed the women to keep their wardrobes and forced some of his lieutenants to give up their rooms for them.[193] In fact, one of the prisoners from the *Wales* was an ex-U.S. Consul, who offered to testify for Semmes regarding his good treatment of prisoners after the war. Semmes reciprocated this support by commending the man as a "Christian and a gentleman."[194] After capturing the *Ariel* on 7 December 1862, Semmes found himself with five hundred anxious women and children. To quell their fears, he dispatched a uniformed lieutenant to inform the women that the *Alabama* was not the "pirate" ship

they had heard about from the newspapers.[195] After a few days, Semmes released the vessel under a ransom bond.[196]

Semmes also showed his character by disapproving the conduct of several Northern commercial captains. For example, the *Jabez Snow*'s captain had a "chambermaid," the *Union Jack*'s skipper had a "stewardess," and onboard the *Conrad*, Semmes found a woman who "claimed to be a passenger."[197] Semmes described these captains as "shameless Yankee skippers" for their immoral conduct.[198] In contrast, Arthur Sinclair, one of his officers, described Semmes as having a "noble and generous soul." Sinclair made this comment after observing the care Semmes showed to his prisoners.[199]

Another incident reveals the character of Semmes. In July 1863, while in Saldanha Bay, South Africa, one of the ship's engineers, Simeon Cummings, died from an accidental gunshot wound returning from a hunting trip. Semmes expressed deep sorrow after the incident.[200] The colors were half-masted and at a neighboring farmer's property, the crew held a burial ceremony sixty miles from Cape Town. Semmes wrote, "A young life had been suddenly cut short in a far distant land."[201] During the subsequent transit to the East Indies in September 1863, Semmes reflected in his memoirs, "I have enjoyed life to a reasonable extent, and trust I shall have fortitude to meet with Christian calmness any fate that may be in store for me . . . My dear family I consign with confidence to His care, and our beloved country I feel certain He will protect and preserve."[202]

Semmes also prepared his crew for battle. According to deserter Clarence Yonge's 1863 affidavit, only ten men on the ship had experience working a man-of-war gun.[203] Consequently, Semmes began gun training soon after taking command in the

Azores. He positioned the ship outside commerce lanes, while he organized the crew and prepared the guns for operation.[204] The men were typically mustered twice a day on weekdays and usually one fourth of the crew exercised the guns or small arms during these times.[205] However, due to lack of ammunition, general quarter exercises were often dry runs.[206] Even so, several live fires provided an indication of the crew's developing proficiency.

In September 1862, after capturing the whaler, *Courser*, and removing her crew, each of the *Alabama*'s eight gun crews fired three times at the vessel. However, if any of the shots hit the target, they did not cause it to sink, as a fire crew ultimately sent the ship to the bottom.[207] Even so, Semmes described the effort as "pretty fair for green hands for the first time."[208] He also believed the progress of his gun crews "was quite satisfactory."[209] Off Newfoundland in October 1862, Semmes gave his crew practice on the *Wave Crest*, which was carrying grain from New York to England. However, like the *Courser*, she also needed to be burned to send her to the bottom.[210] On 5 January 1863, Semmes began drilling his gun crews on a daily basis in preparation for operations off Galveston.[211] He wrote in his memoirs that his crew was well drilled and his powder was in good condition.[212] During the battle with the *Hatteras* on 11 January 1863, the gunners performed well and sunk the warship in only thirteen minutes. However, the ships engaged at point blank range.

In April 1864, while en route to France, Semmes gave his gunners practice on the captured vessel, *Rockingham*, which was out of New Hampshire. Of the twenty-four shots fired, seven were hits. Biographer and naval officer John Ellicott points out that "this exceed[ed] threefold the ordinary percentage of hits in battle."[213] In addition,

Semmes wrote that his crew fired shot and shell to "good effect."[214] Lieutenant Arthur Sinclair described the performance as "fine execution."[215] However, the skipper of the *Rockingham* challenged this, pointing out that only four of the twenty-four shots caused damage to the *hull*, attributing it to poor shooting.[216] Also of note, the *Rockingham*, positioned only five hundred yards away, did not simulate a maximum range engagement.[217] Another concern, noted by Kell, was that one in three shells failed to explode. Semmes also recognized the problem and ordered his gunner to replace all the fuses.[218] Even so, a few days later, a shell fired towards another vessel still failed to explode. Thus, despite the time spent drilling and the success against the *Hatteras*, questions surrounding proficiency and ammunition quality were evident in early 1864.

As he did on the *Sumter*, Semmes judiciously applied international law to avoid antagonizing neutral powers. In South Africa, Semmes demonstrated his cautiousness in releasing the *Wenzell* in August 1863. Even though the ship was seven miles from land, it was inside the mouth of False Bay, South Africa.[219] The astonished captain of the commercial vessel expressed thanks to the disappointed Semmes. Despite his cautiousness, Semmes also showed a willingness to violate international law, such as when he decided to bring a captured vessel into port in the Brazilian penal colony of Fernando de Noronha in April 1863. He correctly assumed local authorities would not protest.[220] At the time, concerns for neutrals primarily involved the European powers of France, Great Britain, and Spain, which could influence the war. Interestingly, in October 1864, the captain of the USS *Wachusett* also violated Brazil's territorial waters in capturing the CSS *Florida*.[221]

Semmes also used his knowledge of international law to argue for the release of his satellite raider, the CSS *Tuscaloosa*. While the colonial authorities in South Africa seized the vessel on account of its prior American ownership, Semmes pointed out that "no nation has the right to inquire into the *antecedents* of the ships of war of another nation."[222] While his argument eventually worked, the delay caused by hearings in the British House of Commons caused the ship to remain in port in South Africa for the rest of the war.[223]

Semmes intended for the *Tuscaloosa* to expand his impact against commercial vessels. This new raider was once the *Conrad*, which Semmes captured off Brazil in June 1863. The vessel's small size allowed Semmes to detach a team from his crew without hampering his own operations. It was three hundred and fifty tons with "good sailing qualities," and Semmes decided he could spare the men to man her.[224] Consequently, four officers and ten enlisted from the *Alabama* joined one sailor from the *Conrad* to form the crew.[225] With the *Alabama* crew numbering over one hundred, this was a small percentage. Semmes also helped arm the vessel with two twelve-pound brass rifled guns taken from another captured vessel, the *Talisman*.[226]

The *Tuscaloosa* experienced limited success before its mission ended in failure. While it captured the *Santee*, it released the ship with a ransom bond, due to its British cargo of rice.[227] After meeting up with the *Alabama* in South Africa, the *Tuscaloosa* took to the seas again in August 1863 to prowl the South Atlantic.[228] However, on 25 December 1863, South African officials detained the vessel after it returned to Cape Town. In six months, the *Alabama's* satellite raider captured only one American vessel and the effort by Semmes to expand his impact proved unsuccessful.[229]

In contrast, the *Alabama* achieved remarkable success. In the Azores, just after taking command in August 1862, Semmes captured six whaling ships. At one point, the *Alabama* had about seventy prisoners, which included crews from three whalers. In addition, the *Alabama* pulled eight small whaleboats behind her.[230] By mid-October 1862, after just six weeks of raiding, the *Alabama* had captured seventeen ships.[231] In November 1862, Semmes captured his second contraband vessel of the war, the *Thomas B. Wales*, which was carrying saltpeter to Boston from Calcutta.[232] (Semmes took his first contraband vessel off Gibraltar while commanding the *Sumter*.) In addition to seizing commercial vessels, in January 1863, Semmes also sank the *Hatteras*, a Union warship, off Galveston. Off Brazil in April 1863, the *Alabama* captured its sixteenth whaling vessel.[233] The following month, also off Brazil, Semmes seized the 973-ton *Sea Lark*, traveling from Boston to San Francisco, with an estimated value of five hundred and fifty thousand dollars, making it his most valuable prize.[234]

Historian John Taylor summarizes, "In eight months at sea, the *Alabama* had sunk one Union warship and burned thirty-seven merchantmen, the latter with an estimated total value of some $2.5 million–an amount ten times the purchase price of the *Alabama.*"[235] In addition, during the twenty-two month cruise of the *Alabama*, Semmes had taken and released about two thousand prisoners.[236] Taylor also points out, "Of the approximately 220 ships captured by Confederate cruisers during the war, seventy-two – more than 30 percent – were taken in the crucial first half of 1863. The *Alabama* alone captured twenty-six of the seventy-two."[237] After the war, the damage done by the *Alabama*, and other raiders*,* led to settlement claims against England due its violation of

neutrality. In 1872, England agreed to pay fifteen and a half million dollars to the United States.[238]

The *Alabama*'s achievements extended beyond just the number of merchant vessels captured. American commerce vessels avoided the established trade routes. Semmes claimed that one ship altered course by four hundred miles.[239] In Singapore on 21 December 1863, over twenty merchant ships remained in port due to the *Alabama*'s presence.[240] In addition, the destruction of one hundred and ten thousand tons of Union shipping by Confederate cruisers eventually forced the North to reluctantly shift warships from the blockade. Historian John M. Taylor writes, "The rise in maritime insurance rates, the rush to switch vessels to British registry, and the attempts to fabricate ownership documents on cargo [hindered commerce and decimated profits]."[241]

By the end of 1862, the financial impact on the North was significant. In fact, during the war, eight hundred thousand tons of shipping transferred to foreign ownership.[242] From 1862 to 1863, five hundred American ships changed flags, as "American ships could no longer get cargoes."[243] Semmes wrote that many American ships "disappeared" by sale rather than by capture, as their owners could not employ them.[244] In the East Indies in November 1863, the captain of the USS *Wyoming*, patrolling the theater, reported to Welles, "Nearly all of the American vessels in the China seas have changed flags, otherwise [they] get no employment."[245] In these ways, Semmes achieved results even when he failed to capture many prizes.

While changing flags proved largely effective, the maneuver did not always work. Near the Straits of Malacca on 24 December 1863, Semmes burned an American vessel with British cargo that he claimed switched to British ownership only days prior.[246] The

vessel itself lacked a bill of sale and, while Semmes knew the cargo it carried was actually British, the captain did not have papers stating so.[247] After Semmes burned the ship, the captain confessed the ship's transfer was illegitimate.[248] Semmes wrote that he had "every motive not to offend neutrals," but would burn cargo if it had fraudulent papers. His attention to detail and aggressiveness in capturing his fiftieth vessel spread renewed fear through the American merchant fleet.[249]

Semmes also showed a willingness to challenge Union warships. Despite Mallory's advice to avoid engaging enemy warships, Semmes learned from newspapers about a Union operation against Galveston.[250] Upon arriving in the Union controlled waters in January 1863, Semmes found five enemy warships blockading the port. One of them, the USS *Hatteras,* spotted the *Alabama* and decided to investigate. Semmes lured the *Hatteras* about twenty miles from the fleet. After nightfall on 11 January, Semmes surprised the American vessel, announcing his identity while opening fire at a range of less than a hundred yards.[251] Despite the deception, Lieutenant Commander Homer Blake had suspected a ruse and his crew immediately returned fire. However, it made no difference, and in thirteen minutes, fires and flooding forced Blake to surrender.[252]

The *Alabama* had defeated the 1,126-ton side-wheel *Hatteras,* which had moved passengers on the Delaware River prior to the war.[253] While the *Alabama* suffered thirteen hits, she sustained no significant damage, although seven men were wounded.[254] Admiral David D. Porter later commented on this engagement, "Semmes displayed great daring in thus bearding the lion in his den, and entering waters he knew to be full of his enemy's gunboats."[255]

As the cruise of the *Alabama* neared its end, Semmes still looked for another fight. In early December 1863, at Pulo Condore, in present-day Vietnam, Semmes spent two weeks repairing the ship, including the bottom copper sheets, which were wearing thin and falling off. The crew also tarred the rigging.[256] In addition, "The constant action of fire and salt had nearly destroyed" the ship's boilers.[257] Even so, Semmes felt the *Alabama* matched up against the *Wyoming*, which patrolled the theater alone. However, the two ships missed each other. Not to be deterred, Semmes informed Kell that he planned to challenge a Federal warship before he took the *Alabama* to Europe for overhaul.[258]

Like his ship, Semmes was also worn down by the end of 1863 and felt the weight on his spirit of a "sorrowful future."[259] News from the home front included Sherman's march through Georgia and Lee's struggles in Virginia. With his ship in need of repairs, the morale of his crew deteriorating, and American commerce vessels hiding in port, Semmes headed for Europe. Semmes dismissed landing in Spain, due to his previous frustrations with Spanish authorities while commanding the *Sumter*.[260] Not encountering a Federal warship, the *Alabama* pulled into Cherbourg, France, and Semmes requested repairs.

While it seemed the journey of the *Alabama* was over, the vacationing emperor and Winslow's subsequent arrival presented a new option. While Semmes waited to hear from Paris, on 14 June 1864, the *Kearsarge* pulled into the harbor, but did not anchor. Winslow then steered his ship to take up position outside French territorial waters.[261] On the same day, Semmes wrote the U.S. Consul, "My intention is to fight the *Kearsarge* . . .

I beg she will not depart before I am ready to go out."[262] Several days later, on the morning of 19 June, Semmes fought and lost one of the great sea battles of the Civil War.

Like Winslow, Semmes consistently demonstrated the leadership skills delineated by the LRM. His character, presence, and intellect allowed him to achieve impressive results. He demonstrated courage in combat during two wars and combined a passion for the mission, a strong sense of honor, and sound judgment to earn the devotion and trust of his men. His resilience and confidence allowed him to overcome setbacks. During his time commanding the *Sumter* and *Alabama*, he achieved greater success than any other Confederate ship captain.[263]

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[1] Warren F. Spencer, *Raphael Semmes: The Philosophical Mariner* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1997), 6-9.

[2] Ibid., 8-10.

[3] Ibid., 10.

[4] Ibid., 8-11.

[5] Ibid., 10.

[6] Wade G. Dudley, "Confederate Raider Raphael Semmes: Catch Me If You Can!," *HistoryNet*, 13 January 2010, accessed 24 March 2018, http://www.historynet.com/confederate-raider-raphael-semmes-catch-me-if-you-can.htm.

[7] Spencer, 9-16.

[8] Ibid., 20.

[9] Ibid., 32.

[10] Ibid., 31.

[11] Raphael Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War* (Cincinnati: WM. H. Moore and Co., 1851), 90-91.

[12] Ibid., 92.

[13] Spencer, 20-33.

[14] Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1868), 346.

[15] John M. Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2004), 16.

[16] Spencer, 34.

[17] Ibid., 33-35.

[18] Raphael Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War*, 93.

[19] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 16.

[20] Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War*, 134.

[21] Ibid., 126-41.

[22] Spencer, 39-41.

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[24] Ibid., 54-56.

[25] Spencer, 63-64; and Raphael Semmes, *Service Afloat and Ashore during the Mexican War*, 90-91.

[26] Spencer, 67-69.

[27] Ibid., 74.

[28] Ibid., 75.

[29] Spencer C. Tucker, *Raphael Semmes and the 'Alabama'* (Abilene, TX: McWhiney Foundation Press, 1998), 21.

[30] Spencer, 20-40.

[31] Ibid., 77.

[32] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 18.

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[34] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 18.

[35] Ibid., 21, 75-76.

[36] Ibid., 19.

[37] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 187.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid., 91.

[40] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 23.

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[43] Ibid., 98.

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[49] Ibid., 343.

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[52] William Marvel, *The 'Alabama' and the 'Kearsarge:' The Sailor's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 154.

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[60] Kell, 147.

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[62] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 115.

[63] Ibid., 113-15.

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[66] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 26; and Kell, 148-149.

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[80] Symonds, 7.

[81] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 260-62.

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[86] Ibid.

[87] Ibid., 344.

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[89] Kell, 169.

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[91] Marvel, *The 'Alabama' and the 'Kearsarge:' The Sailor's Civil War*, 39.

[92] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 316.

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[100] Ibid., 298.

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[102] Ibid., 166.

[103] McPherson, 24.

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[106] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 31; and McPherson, 117.

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[108] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 54.

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[135] Delaney, "The *Alabama's* Bold and Determined Man," 2.

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[137] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 412.

[138] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 44.

[139] Marvel, *The 'Alabama' and the 'Kearsarge:' The Sailor's Civil War*, 72.

[140] Ibid., 73.

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[142] Ibid., 79.

[143] Ibid., 104.

[144] Ibid. 121,

[145] Ibid., 188.

[146] Norman C. Delaney, "The Firing Here Became Continual," *Naval History* 30, no. 3 (June 2016): 2; and Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 88.

[147] Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider*, 57.

[148] Tucker, *Raphael Semmes and the 'Alabama*', 20.

[149] Marvel, *The 'Alabama' and the 'Kearsarge:' The Sailor's Civil War*, 154.

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CHAPTER 4

THE BATTLE OF CHERBOURG

After a journey of seventy-five thousand miles, the *Alabama* arrived in Cherbourg, France, on 11 June 1864. In need of repairs, Semmes requested a dry dock for his ship from local officials. Since only the French Navy used Cherbourg, the authorities denied his request, but forwarded it to the emperor, Napoleon III, who was sympathetic to the Confederacy. Semmes, confident he would gain approval, decided to remain in port to await the decision.[1] The next day, while in the Dutch port of Flushing, Winslow received news of the *Alabama's* return to European waters, and departed that night for Cherbourg. Upon Winslow's arrival on the fourteenth, Semmes sent a message to Samuel Barron, the Confederate naval representative in Paris, stating his desire to fight the *Kearsarge*. In the letter, Semmes highlighted the confidence of his crew and his conviction that the *Alabama* was an equal match for the Federal warship.[2]

On the morning of 19 June, after several days of preparation, which included taking on coal, the *Alabama* weighed anchor and steamed toward the *Kearsarge*, which waited four miles away in international waters.[3] On the bluffs above the English Channel, fifteen thousand people gathered to watch the battle. Excitement permeated the air.[4] The French ironclad, the *Couronne*, closely followed the *Alabama* to the three-mile limit, which marked the boundary between territorial and international waters. Another vessel, a civilian yacht from England, named the *Deerhound*, also followed.[5] On the deck of the *Alabama*, the men, dressed in their inspection uniforms, lounged at their guns, conserving their energy before the fight. Some enjoyed a smoke.[6]

On the *Kearsarge*, the sighting of the *Alabama* brought an end to weekly church service. Winslow first ordered the *Kearsarge* away from the *Alabama,* which allowed the ship to achieve top speed and ensured the fight occurred well outside French waters. Winslow then turned directly toward the Confederate raider. A few minutes before eleven, Semmes opened fire with his Blakely rifled gun, which outranged the guns on the *Kearsarge*.[7] At this point, the *Kearsarge* was vulnerable to a dangerous head-on shot. However, the Federal warship escaped with little damage from this opening barrage.[8]

Three minutes later, after closing to within 900 yards, Winslow turned to port and opened fire with his starboard guns.[9] One of the *Kearsarge's* rounds hit near the *Alabama's* forward rifle port, smashing one man's leg and causing the death of another.[10] Seven miles off the coast, the ships continued exchanging fire while maneuvering in a circular pattern. The circles became tighter as the ships closed to within 500 yards.[11] The *Kearsarge* rounds began to range high, damaging the rigging of the *Alabama*. After a round damaged the spanker gaff, the *Alabama's* flag nearly fell, but ended up hanging twenty feet from the deck.[12]

After about a half hour, the battle's turning point occurred. One of the *Alabama's* shells lodged in the stern of the *Kearsarge*, shaking the whole ship.[13] However, the shell did not explode.[14] Another round struck the *Kearsarge*'s forward pivot gun. It injured three men, but also failed to explode.[15] The *Alabama* then started shooting high.[16] In contrast, the shooting of the *Kearsarge's* crew improved and one of their eleven-inch shells killed or injured most of the seventeen-man crew manning the *Alabama's* aft pivot gun.[17] One of the uninjured men, an Irishman named Michael Mars, retrieved a shovel and pushed human body parts overboard, before re-sanding the deck.[18] The *Kearsarge's*

eleven-inch guns continued their destruction, with three shells entering the *Alabama's* eight-inch pivot-gun port.[19]

In the carnage and chaos, the *Alabama's* crew continued to fight. On deck, one report claims a sailor even picked up a shell and threw it overboard. Another round cut a sailor in two, and "nothing was found of him which could be recognized except the collar of his shirt."[20] Below decks, the surgeon treated the wounded. From his position on the horse-block, Semmes planned his next move and directed the ship's maneuvering while leaning on the hammock rail. He could see his shells exploding against the side of the *Kearsarge*, but to little effect.[21] He called to Kell, "Our shell strike the enemy's side, doing little damage, and fall off in the water; try solid shot."[22] The *Alabama* switched to shot and then alternated between shot and shell for the remainder of the fight.[23] It made little difference.

Several more hits soon doomed the *Alabama*. One to the rudder prevented normal steering. Additional rounds hit the boilers, putting out the fires, and burying several men beneath the coal.[24] Additional impacts at the waterline caused flooding. The *Kearsarge* also began to edge around the *Alabama's* stern. In response, Semmes shifted fire to his port guns. At the start of the eighth circle, with the boats about 400 yards apart, Semmes ordered a turn toward the coast. His crew skillfully used their sails to steer for shore and the safety of French waters. Despite a splinter wound to his hand, Semmes remained on deck, and wrapped it with a handkerchief.[25] After going below, Kell reported back to Semmes that the ship was sinking, and that she would go under in ten minutes.[26] Consequently, a little after noon, "Old Beeswax" gave the order to abandon ship. One of the sailors held up a white flag.[27]

Upon seeing the flag, the crew of the *Kearsarge* let out a cheer. On the *Alabama,* the men tried to figure out how to survive. Semmes ordered the wounded into the two seaworthy lifeboats.[28] While they headed for the *Kearsarge*, most of the remaining crew jumped into the sea.[29] The men who could swim tried to avoid drowning in the vortex. Some men who could not swim refused to leave and perished with the ship. Semmes was one of the last to leave and threw his sword into the water before jumping in himself.[30] At 12:24 PM, while men struggled to survive in the cold waters, the *Alabama* slipped below the surface and settled to a dark, watery grave one hundred and ninety feet below.[31]

Winslow asked the *Deerhound* to assist in the rescue effort.[32] However, after picking up forty-two men, including Semmes, the vessel set its course for Southampton, England, before Winslow could intervene.[33] The escape of the most notorious Confederate raider captain proved an embarrassment to Winslow and the U.S. Navy. For Semmes, the fortuitous involvement of the *Deerhound* likely assuaged somewhat the disappointment of his loss. Nevertheless, in a little over an hour, the *Kearsarge* had defeated the *Alabama*. Surprisingly, the Federal warship unleashed only 173 rounds to the *Alabama's* 370. Despite the disparity, the *Kearsarge* sustained only thirteen hull hits, with only one of these strikes causing casualties. In contrast, the *Alabama* suffered forty-one casualties, twelve of them from drowning.[34]

Historians point to numerous factors to explain the *Kearsarge's* decisive victory. While both vessels were relatively equal, and manned with trained crews and experienced leadership, some historians, as well as Semmes and Kell, have focused on the fact that the *Kearsarge*'s "chain armor" protected her boilers. However, the *Alabama*'s refueling of coal in Cherbourg kept her lower in the water, which also provided some protection to

her engines. Moreover, the executive officer of the *Kearsarge* claimed that few shells impacted the chain armament. Another factor mentioned is that the *Kearsarge's* eleven-inch guns were larger than the guns on the *Alabama*. However, the *Alabama* had guns with longer range.[35] Even so, during this era, difficulties in aiming limited this advantage. In fact, even with rifled cannon, ten percent accuracy was considered good shooting.[36] Another factor, the *Alabama's* fuse and powder malfunctions, has also been highlighted. In fact, the night before the battle, the crew of the *Alabama* threw seven barrels of damp powder overboard.[37] Moreover, early in the fight, two shells that failed to explode could have proved decisive. Even so, inaccurate firing by the *Alabama* also points to the significance of gun proficiency. Out of the 370 rounds fired from the *Alabama*, only thirteen hit the *Kearsarge's* hull. Clearly, a variety of factors influenced the outcome.[38]

The leadership of Winslow and Semmes played a decisive role. Winslow's aggressiveness and commitment guided his crew. A year before the battle, a disease to Winslow's right eye left him blind in that eye.[39] Even so, Winslow deferred treatment so he could continue the mission.[40] When Winslow received news of the *Alabama's* arrival in Cherbourg, he immediately recalled his crew and put to sea by nightfall.[41] That evening, Winslow mustered his men and informed them that the *Alabama* had been found. His men went wild with excitement. They wanted to take on the *Alabama* and Winslow told them "he was going to make every effort to fight her."[42] On 13 June, Winslow also wrote his wife, stating, "I want to catch Semmes."[43] During the battle, one of the *Kearsarge's* seamen, after suffering a wound to his right leg, said to the surgeon, while smiling, "It is all right, and I am satisfied, for we are whipping the *Alabama*. I willingly will lose my leg or my life, if it is necessary."[44]

Semmes also demonstrated a fighting spirit. After not finding the USS *Wyoming* in the East Indies, Semmes hoped to encounter a Federal warship while en route to France. After the *Kearsarge's* arrival in Cherbourg, Semmes decided the same day he would challenge her. Semmes wanted to be known as a warrior, not as a pirate or a privateer. He also did not want to face criticism for avoiding a fight against an equal vessel. In addition, another victory over a warship would burnish his reputation as a sailor and show the defeat of the *Hatteras* was not an anomaly.[45] However, unlike the battle off Galveston, at Cherbourg Semmes lacked the advantage of surprise. Nevertheless, Semmes chose to fight. He also disregarded the concerns of Kell, who reminded him that the *Kearsarge* had two eleven-inch guns. The worn down *Alabama* also had defective powder and malfunctioning fuses.[46] When these issues were brought to his attention, Semmes stated, "I will take the chances of one in three."[47] In regards to the *Kearsarge's* "armor," Lieutenant Sinclair believed the French port admiral informed Semmes of this modification. However, Semmes and Kell denied ever knowing about it. This was not unlikely since the *Kearsarge* was officially characterized as a wooden steam-sloop. Moreover, Semmes had seen the *Kearsarge* in Gibraltar two years earlier, which was before Winslow fitted the warship with chains.[48]

Semmes inspired his men with a sense of pride and loyalty. Before the battle, he asked Lieutenant Sinclair how he thought the crew would fight. Sinclair responded, "I can't answer the question, sir. I can assure you the crew will do their full duty and follow you to the death."[49] As the *Alabama* departed the harbor, Semmes addressed his men, "The name of your ship has become a household word wherever Civilization extends. Shall that name be tarnished by defeat?"[50] In response, the men shouted, "Never!

Never!"[51] Semmes continued by reminding the men of their victory over the *Hatteras*. Semmes wrote, "My crew seemed not only willing, but anxious for the combat, and I had every confidence in their steadiness and drill."[52] In fact, the mostly British crew had been singing,

> *We're homeward bound, we're homeward bound,*
> *And soon we'll stand on English ground*
> *But ere that English land we see,*
> *We first must fight the Kearsargee.*[53]

For Semmes, a crew that had joined together almost two years before with promises of good pay and prize money was ready for battle.

While the willingness of Semmes to do battle is commendable, his judgment at Cherbourg is questionable. In addition to the concerns outlined by Kell, his adversary on the *Kearsarge* was one of the most experienced and capable officers in the U.S. Navy. Semmes surely remembered his brief time together with Winslow almost twenty years before during the Mexican War. While Semmes might have feared the French would disapprove his request for dry dock, and that more Federal warships would soon arrive, he still had alternatives.[54] He could have abandoned the *Alabama* like he had the *Sumter*. At this stage of the war, Confederate raiders had largely accomplished all they could. Northern merchant vessels, which had fled to foreign ownership, were no longer widespread targets. Subsequent raiding would only achieve limited tactical victories, and not alter the outcome of the war.

Another option for Semmes was to escape Cherbourg, as he had done when cornered by the *San Jacinto* in Martinique. The single *Kearsarge* could only guard one of two channels leading to Cherbourg. Semmes could also likely find a more favorable port for repairs in England. Furthermore, the *Alabama* was ultimately a raider, not a warship,

and the Confederacy had only a limited number of ships. According to historian John M. Taylor, "In taking on the *Kearsarge*, Semmes had let his emotions control his judgment. His gun crews were insufficiently trained, he underestimated the enemy, and he committed a cardinal sin: he didn't keep his powder dry."[55] Ultimately, the aggressiveness of Semmes overrode his usual sound judgment.

In contrast, Winslow demonstrated exemplary innovation and judgment in preparation for battle. Soon after taking command of the *Kearsarge*, Winslow draped sheet chains along forty-nine and a half feet of the vessel's side. The chains were bolted down in conformity with the ship's form so the enemy would not see them.[56] This idea possibly originated with Admiral David Glasgow Farragut.[57] After the battle, Kell wrote that had Semmes known of this protection, he would not have fought the battle.[58] Winslow also trained his men for combat. In April 1864, eight days before the *Alabama's* crew fired on the *Rockingham*, Winslow's gunners shot thirty-five rounds against an improvised target.[59] Off Cherbourg, Winslow's crew again practiced gun drills and practiced repelling boarders, in case the *Alabama* rammed them.[60] In addition, before the battle, Winslow received intelligence from the U.S. Vice-Consul at Cherbourg, which informed him of the results of the *Alabama's* practice shoot against the *Rockingham*. Winslow also knew that the *Alabama* carried six 32-pound guns, one 8-inch 68-pound aft pivot gun, and one 100-pound rifled forward pivot gun.[61]

Winslow also conferred with his officers to discuss tactics and, astutely, did not anchor in Cherbourg harbor. According to international law, this would have required him to give the *Alabama* a twenty-four hour head start.[62] Then, after spotting the *Alabama* leaving the harbor on 19 June, Winslow skillfully maneuvered his vessel. He

first steered the *Kearsarge* seven miles offshore to ensure the battle remained outside the three-mile protective limit. This also gave the boilers time to reach full steam. As a result, Winslow had a speed advantage during the engagement, which allowed him to pass astern the *Alabama.*[63] After the battle, Lieutenant Commander James Thornton, the executive officer, said to Winslow, "Sir, let me congratulate you on the success of your plan of battle, and compliment you on the skill and judgment displayed in its execution."[64]

During the fight, Winslow's military bearing and guidance aided execution. He calmly directed the steering of the ship by motioning his hand. After ordering his crew to fire at will, Winslow added, "But make sure of your aim."[65] One of the Dahlgren gun loaders also recalled the first lieutenant telling them not to fire unless they had a target.[66] As a result, the *Kearsarge* gunners only fired 173 rounds during the sixty-five minute battle. This rate was less than half the rate of fire of the *Alabama*.[67] However, the *Kearsarge* gunners proved more accurate. According to Winslow biographer John Ellicott, "Ranges were carefully estimated, the sighting was deliberate, and the passing of smoke was awaited with patience."[68] Winslow's men "performed like veterans," even though for most of them, it was their first battle.[69]

Ellicott also noted, "The characteristics of the man who commanded the *Kearsarge* seemed to have imbued the whole ship's company."[70] Winslow later commended Thornton for his composure and encouragement of the men during the fight.[71] Ellicott also pointed out that, early in the battle, when the *Kearsarge* suffered several hits with casualties, morale on the *Kearsarge* could have waivered. Yet, due to their discipline and training, the aim of the gunners actually improved. They then hit the

aft pivot-gun of the *Alabama*, killing or wounding about seventeen men.[72] With increased confidence, the crew then directed fire below the waterline of the *Alabama*. Soon, the Confederate vessel was flooding.[73]

After the battle, Thornton commended the gunners for their rapid, efficient, cool, and effective performance.[74] Thornton also wrote, "The English will not ascribe it to superior training and discipline on our side, which is the true cause, but persist in trying to find fault with the fairness of the battle, when nothing could be fairer."[75] While Thornton claimed that only two rounds from the *Alabama* hit the *Kearsarge's* protective chains, Master's Mate George Fullam of the *Alabama*, who pulled alongside the *Kearsarge* to unload survivors, told a different story.[76] Fullam reported that some of the chains had been broken and that the protective wood paneling was heavily damaged.[77]

As for the *Alabama's* performance, the lack of preparation and proficiency of the crew, along with the condition of the ammunition, helps explain her ineffectiveness. In late 1863, while in the East Indies, one of the crewmembers from the captured vessel *Contest* reported that the *Alabama* was in a run down state, had loose rigging, and was dirty. In addition, the crew rarely wore uniforms.[78] During his nine days onboard, the prisoner also noticed the crew, during training with the big guns, did not appear proficient.[79] In fact, Henry Higgins, one of the *Alabama* crewmembers, who joined the vessel in Singapore, claimed that the *Alabama* only had one competent gunner, who had been trained by the British Navy.[80] While the crew had performed well against the *Hatteras* over a year before, in that fight they benefited from surprise and opened fire from pointblank range.[81] In addition, throughout the cruise, the crew rarely practiced live fires due to a limited supply of ammunition. While Semmes acquired 528 pounds of

powder from the *Georgia* in May 1863, his powder became damp, diminishing its effectiveness.[82]

In April 1864, while en route to France and within two months of the Battle of Cherbourg, Semmes gave his gunners practice on the *Rockingham*. Of the twenty-four shots fired, seven were hits. "This exceed[ed] threefold the ordinary percentage of hits in battle."[83] Lieutenant Arthur Sinclair described the performance as "fine execution." In contrast, he called the shooting against the *Kearsarge* a "woeful failure."[84] However, only four of the twenty-four shots impacted the hull of the *Rockingham*.[85] Also of significance, Kell assessed that one in three shells failed to explode during the *Rockingham* practice. Semmes agreed and ordered his gunner to replace all the fuses.[86] Even so, a few days later, a shell fired towards another vessel still did not explode. The night before the battle, the crew even threw seven barrels of damp powder overboard.[87] Due to this sequence of events, it is reasonable to conclude that Semmes willingly chose to fight with defective ammunition.

While Semmes could have won the battle, poor tactical execution led to his decisive defeat. Historian William Marvel writes that Semmes should have kept his distance from the *Kearsarge* and used his long-range Blakely gun to his advantage.[88] However, maintaining a standoff distance and hitting targets at long range was no easy task. In fact, the *Alabama's* first three volleys at range went high, hit the rigging, and caused little damage.[89] While the *Alabama* succeeded in sending more rounds downrange than the *Kearsarge*, most of the rounds failed to impact. The *Alabama's* crew possibly fired too quickly, with most of their rounds going high.[90] While two rounds did strike critical areas on the *Kearsarge*, they both failed to explode. In their excitement, the

Alabama's crew also neglected to take the lead caps off some of the shells, which kept them from exploding.[91]

Historian John M. Taylor concludes that the gun crews, the powder, and lack of respect for the *Kearsarge* led to the *Alabama*'s defeat. However, historian Eugene Canfield concludes,

> It is unlikely that the *Kearsarge's* chain armor, the *Alabama's* poor powder, or even the poor training and marksmanship of the gun crews made a significant difference in the outcome of the battle. The heavy XI-inch pivot guns fired by well-trained crews dominated the lighter and smaller pivot guns fired by poorly trained, excited gun crews of the *Alabama*.[92]

Gideon Welles also credited the eleven-inch smoothbore Dahlgren guns, writing in his diary they quickly tore the *Alabama* to pieces.[93] While these assessments differ, they each point to issues related to the decision-making of Semmes.

Even so, Semmes was not completely unsound in his judgment. After a cruise of twenty-two months, he recognized the exhaustion of his crew. In addition, his ship needed major repairs. For instance, the copper on the bottom was daily wearing away, which diminished the ship's speed. The *Alabama's* boilers were also nearly destroyed.[94] Consequently, Semmes prudently headed for a European port with a dry dock. Once there, and after deciding to engage the *Kearsarge*, Semmes used the few days before the fight to prepare. He had his crew practice boarding with pistols and swords.[95] He also met with a Confederate ordnance expert to discuss shot versus shell tactics.[96]

Prior to the invention of fused shells in the 1820s, naval gunnery had remained nearly the same for hundreds of years. By the mid-1850s, the U.S. Navy had adopted guns that could fire both shell and solid shot. The shells had a fuse and contained powder inside of them. Not only would they cause damage from impact, they would then

explode, potentially causing even greater destruction. As for solid shot, the most likely danger was damaged rigging, which would hinder the mobility of the ship. In addition, splintered pieces of wood could injure sailors. A vessel suffering hits from solid shot could potentially take dozens of hits and continue fighting. Shells, however, could cause a significant hole in a ship from a single explosion.[97]

Prior to 1840, the recommended range for a naval engagement was one hundred yards due to the inaccuracy of smoothbore cannon. By the time of the Civil War, rifled technology increased this distance up to two thousand yards.[98] Semmes aimed to take advantage of this by using his rifled gun to engage the *Kearsarge* before Winslow could open fire. Semmes also showed sound judgment in spending the several days prior to the battle filling his ship with more coal.[99] This additional weight increased the *Alabama's* draft and protected the ship's vital area. With the coaling finished on Saturday, Semmes challenged the *Kearsarge* the next morning.

Semmes also showed good judgment in shifting one of his 32-pound guns to the starboard side, increasing the firepower directed against the *Kearsarge*.[100] After the battle, Semmes skillfully avoided capture. After being rescued by the *Deerhound*, Semmes laid down in the boat to avoid detection. He then put on a hat from the *Deerhound*, grabbed an oar, and pretended to be a member of the crew.[101] When asked by the *Deerhound's* captain where to land, Semmes responded, "I am under English colors; the sooner you land me on English soil the better."[102] In response to his escape, the U.S. Navy concluded that Semmes violated his surrender. Not surprisingly, Semmes, the lawyer, argued that a white flag is only an "offer" to surrender.[103]

Following the battle, Winslow ordered his men to treat the *Alabama* prisoners with kindness. He also provided them with grog and dry clothing.[104] His concern for their well-being surprised the crew.[105] Winslow then pardoned the men, which drew criticism from Welles, who called the decision a "grave error."[106] Winslow naturally defended his decision, writing that he did not have room to house prisoners and that he planned to quickly depart to capture the *Florida* or *Rappahannock*. In addition, prisoners would require guards, which would decrease the *Kearsarge's* available manpower for a future engagement.[107] In his response to Welles, Winslow also mentioned the lack of other Federal vessels, a subtle criticism directed at the Secretary of the Navy, who had neglected Winslow's request for assistance prior to the fight. In an age where slow communications forced commanders to act independently, Winslow confidently addressed his superior, who was thousands of miles away in Washington.

Both Winslow and Semmes demonstrated their faith in God during the Battle of Cherbourg. On the morning of the fight, Winslow prepared to read and instruct his crew on the Bible. It was at this moment that the *Alabama* departed the harbor, causing the quartermaster to sound the alarm. Church services ended abruptly.[108] After the battle, as the *Kearsarge* headed for Cherbourg with seventy prisoners, Winslow called the crew to muster and expressed thanksgiving to God.[109] As for Semmes, on the day before the battle, he told his crew, "God knows what the outcome will be. Thus far He has shielded us. I believe He still watches over us. I have taken this responsibility alone. It was the only way out, with honor."[110] That night, Semmes asked the Confederate agent in Cherbourg to attend mass the next morning and offer prayers for the men who might be

killed.[111] That same evening, while some of his officers attended a banquet ashore, Semmes went to a church and returned to the ship by ten in the evening.[112]

Like Winslow, Semmes also showed concern for others. After surrendering, he sought to save his wounded first, ordering their rescue on the two seaworthy lifeboats.[113] Keeping with tradition, Semmes was one of the last to leave the ship.[114] He later wrote about his sorrow in seeing the dead and wounded as the ship went down. "I felt as a father feels who has lost his children – his children who had followed him to the uttermost end of the earth, in sunshine and storm, and been always true to him."[115] The compassion of Semmes led him to criticize the *Kearsarge* for failing to rescue more men. He contrasted that effort with his recovery of all the sailors from the USS *Hatteras*.

After the battle, Winslow traveled to Paris to receive medical treatment for his eye. The doctor informed him that his eyesight would never fully return and that he needed to be cautious with his other eye.[116] Nevertheless, on his return voyage home, Winslow executed orders to venture into the Caribbean in an attempt to find the *Florida*.[117] Despite their past differences, Welles wrote to Winslow and commended his expertise. He stated, "I trust you may close your cruise by the same exhibition of skill which has already been so creditable to you."[118]

After Winslow's return to the United States, celebrations of his victory led to grand receptions. Winslow's hosts frequently asked him to speak. On one occasion, a reporter described Winslow as modest, unassuming, gentle, and affable, but possessing an "iron will" and "defiant courage."[119] Both President Lincoln and Congress issued formal thanks to Winslow.[120] Welles also wrote, "I congratulate you on your good fortune in meeting the *Alabama*, which has so long avoided the fastest ships and some of

the most vigilant and intelligent officers of the service."[121] He continued, "For the ability you displayed in the contest you have the thanks of the Department."[122] Winslow, in turn, acknowledged his men. He recommended promotions and gave special recognition for those who demonstrated exemplary conduct.[123]

As for Semmes, he and thirteen officers, as well as twenty-seven crewmen, arrived in England on the *Deerhound*. Welcomed by Confederate sympathizers, a physician treated them for free in Southampton. The injured crewmen who landed in France also received care. The paroled crewmembers eventually received payment. In fact, Semmes wrote that every officer and seaman was paid his due.[124] For those killed in action, their earnings were given to their legal representatives. However, except for the funds received from the sale of captured chronometers, the crew failed to benefit from any prize money. For Semmes and his surviving crew, their worldwide fame and legendary accomplishments would have to assuage their lack of monetary gain and tragic defeat off Cherbourg.[125]

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

The Leadership Requirements Model (LRM) provides a useful framework to analyze the leadership of Winslow and Semmes. It defines leadership as "the process of influencing people by providing purpose, direction, and motivation to accomplish the mission and improve the organization."[1] The model describes leadership as consisting of two fundamental components. These are attributes and competencies. Attributes are what a leader must be, while competencies are what a leader must do. The attributes component consists of "character," "presence," and "intellect."[2] The competencies are "leads," "develops," and "achieves."[3]

Throughout their careers, both Winslow and Semmes demonstrated the attributes and competencies of the LRM. Their character, presence, and intellect formed the foundation of their leadership successes. Their warrior ethos and commitment fueled their intensity, while sound judgment generally guided their actions. Although they had different styles, they both showed presence. Both leaders earned the respect of their sailors and prepared them for battle. Winslow and Semmes also showed resilience, learned from experiences, and achieved results. While both commanders committed lapses in judgment, overall, their actions exemplify the LRM.[4]

In June 1864, the two commanders went head-to-head off Cherbourg, France. The *Kearsarge* and the *Alabama*, comparable in size, manning, guns, and speed, traded fire for over an hour, while completing seven turns and launching over five hundred rounds. During the first thirty minutes, the *Alabama* seemed to have the advantage. However, after one of her rounds, which impacted the *Kearsarge*'s vital sternpost, failed to explode,

the tide turned. Calm leadership and deliberate and accurate firing led Winslow and his men to victory, striking a blow against the Confederate raiding effort. Admiral David Glasgow Farragut later commented, "I would sooner have fought that fight than any ever fought on the ocean!"[5]

For Winslow, how did he succeed against the *Alabama* where other American ship captains had failed?[6] Biographer John Ellicott credits Winslow's "supreme judgment."[7] He points out that Winslow "scarcely got a single communication from the Navy Department until his long struggle was crowned with success."[8] In addition, in Winslow, the U.S. Navy had a committed warfighter. Winslow's capacity for hard work and determination were products of an "iron will" and "defiant courage."[9] Despite a debilitating disease, Winslow persevered throughout the duration of his mission. He assumed command of the *Kearsarge* while suffering "pain in all [his] bones" and "excruciating" neuralgia in his eye and face."[10] Over a year later, he engaged in combat with vision in only one eye.[11]

Winslow also gave himself an advantage by innovating, which he had done throughout his career. While he did not possess superior technology, he used available resources to modify his wooden hull, protecting his boilers by hanging chains down the side of the ship. This ability to adapt is a critical skill for military leaders. While Semmes felt the addition of "chain armor" was "unchivalrous," most military tacticians would likely commend Winslow.[12] In fact, even James Bulloch, the chief Confederate agent in Great Britain, stated, "It has never been considered an unworthy ruse for a commander . . . to disguise his strength and to entice a weaker opponent within his reach."[13] At Cherbourg, Winslow enticed Semmes to battle and then decisively defeated him.

As for Semmes, his loss at Cherbourg diminishes his stature. His fighting spirit clearly clouded his judgment. He fought despite his own assessment of the *Alabama*, since he knew her structural strength did not match similar class vessels in the U.S. Navy. In short, the *Alabama* was a raider, not a warship. According to Semmes in his memoir, "[The *Alabama*] was to defend herself, simply, if defense should become necessary."[14] In addition, by 1864, there was little to be gained by engaging the *Kearsarge*. American commercial ships had largely changed to foreign ownership, diminishing the impact of raiders to the Confederate war effort. In fact, historian William Marvel believes that "Southern honor" caused Semmes to unnecessarily sacrifice his men and ship.[15]

In challenging the *Kearsarge*, Semmes also forfeited the critical element of surprise, which had been so valuable in his victory over the *Hatteras* in January 1863. On the Sunday morning of 19 June 1864, the *Alabama* pulled out of the harbor in clear view of the enemy and headed straight for the *Kearsarge*. Moreover, several days before, Semmes notified Winslow of his intention to fight.[16] Today, the U.S. Army values the element of surprise so much that doctrine includes it as one of the four characteristics of the offense.[17] For these reasons, historian Craig Newton points out that the decision of Semmes to fight at Cherbourg raises questions about his judgment.[18]

While the defeat at Cherbourg casts a shadow over Semmes, it has not significantly detracted from his legendary status. In a similar way, the defeat at Gettysburg does not diminish Gen. Robert E. Lee's reputation as a gifted military leader. Just as Lee chose to fight an enemy from a position of weakness, Semmes decided to challenge a Federal warship without the element of surprise. Despite unfavorable circumstances, both Semmes and Lee refused to back down. For Lee, a win at Gettysburg

might have allowed him to advance on Washington and attempt to end the war. For Semmes, a win at Cherbourg would have solidified him as one of the great admirals in American naval history. Instead, their losses serve as reminders that even great commanders have imperfections.

Nevertheless, the leadership of Semmes on the *Sumter* and *Alabama* was remarkable. Captain James Bulloch, the Confederate agent who oversaw construction of the *Alabama*, stated that Semmes "had neither the physique nor the dashing manner which combine to make a showy, brilliant deck officer."[19] However, Arthur Sinclair, one of his lieutenants on the *Alabama*, observed, "The career of the ship under him is perhaps the most conspicuous object-lesson of judicious management and forethought in the annals of any navy."[20] During his time in command, Semmes avoided Federal warships for nearly two years while capturing or burning over sixty commerce vessels. Moreover, he did it with a crew built from scratch, which consisted of mostly English and Irish sailors in need of work. While "discipline had been rigid," Semmes tempered his justice with mercy and gained the respect of his men.[21] The result was "harmony and mutual confidence."[22] Furthermore, of the five hundred crewmembers from the *Sumter* and the *Alabama,* and the two thousand prisoners that passed under his care, Semmes did not lose a single person to disease.[23]

Surprisingly, at Cherbourg, following a journey of over seventy-five thousand miles, historian John Taylor states, "The motley collection of wharf rats whom Semmes had browbeaten across the seven seas were eager to risk their lives for a country most had never seen."[24] Sinclair may well have been right when he wrote that Semmes was "a man of rare genius."[25] While some might disagree, few would argue that he lacked audacity.

As Carl von Clausewitz points out in, *Principles of War*, "Never forget that no military leader has ever become great without audacity."[26] Historian Craig Newton agrees, arguing about Semmes, "No one will ever question his bravery and confidence."[27] Assuredly, the accomplishments of Semmes deservedly make him a legend in naval history.

For today's military leaders, the leadership of Winslow and Semmes provides several key lessons. Winslow had an understandable tendency to become frustrated with superiors. This is not unusual for a leader and disagreements can be useful to the pursuit of the best solutions to problems. However, there is a right and wrong way to address concerns. During his time in the Western Flotilla, Winslow's decision to share his concerns about the conduct of the war with a reporter created discord with his superiors and were probably counterproductive to the effort of resolving the issues. While his views might have been accurate, his unprofessional approach was a clear lapse of judgment.

Later, while in command of the *Kearsarge*, Winslow again went public in aggressively challenging his opponents in England in regards to the Queenstown incident. While this again led to discord with his leadership, this time Winslow's actions had some positive effects, by helping to resolve the controversy. In response to these incidents, Welles remained commendably patient with Winslow, recognizing that his leadership abilities made him a valuable asset. One of the lessons for today's military professionals is that they ought to consider how best to address concerns regarding their superiors. In turn, those in positions of authority should be willing to accept some measure of criticism and also forgive subordinates if it helps accomplish the mission.[28]

The analysis also points to another consideration for today's military leaders. Like the U.S. Army, the Navy could implement the LRM as its guiding framework for leadership development. Instruction on this model could begin at the cadet level, both at the U.S. Naval Academy and at Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) units. Periodic instructor feedback using the LRM would prepare the Navy's newest leaders for their future roles.[29] These evaluations could mirror officer fitness reports, which could be modified to match the model. Current Navy fitness reports evaluate six performance abilities involving leadership. These are professional expertise, command or organizational climate, military bearing / character, teamwork, mission accomplishment / initiative, and leadership. These six areas could be adjusted, without much difficulty, to match the LRM abilities of character, presence, intellect, and leads, develops, and achieves.[30] Similar to the Army, the LRM would apply to active duty Navy service members, guard and reserve personnel, and Navy civilians.[31]

The careers of Winslow and Semmes also highlight the impact of faith in God on leadership. This characteristic is not included in the LRM, but could arguably be considered a subcomponent of the character attribute. Both men trusted God and believed in His sovereignty over their lives. Winslow descended from some of the earliest Puritan settlers in New England, while Semmes came from a Roman Catholic family in rural Maryland. Their Christian faith impacted their treatment of others and their courage in battle. It also played a prominent role in the Battle of Cherbourg. On the night of 18 June 1864, Semmes went to a church and prayed. He also asked the Confederate agent in Cherbourg to attend mass the next morning and offer prayers for the men who might be killed.[32] The next morning, as the *Alabama* weighed anchor, Winslow prepared to preach

to his men on the *Kearsarge*. After the battle, Semmes wrote of Winslow, "I had known, and sailed with him, in the old service, and knew him *then* to be a humane and Christian gentleman."[33] Like many others who fought against each other in the Civil War, Winslow and Semmes sought assistance from the same God in bringing them victory.

For today's military leaders, an understanding of faith in God and its role in character development is vital. Since leadership is an element of combat power, and character is essential to leadership, the formation of character is critical. Today, American soldiers, sailors, and airmen are still free to practice the religion of their choice. Sermons are still heard on U.S. Navy ships and during the USS *Harry S Truman*'s 2007 deployment, the chaplain's prayer for safety and success transmitted over the ship's intercom every night at 2200. Each Sunday, at military bases around the world, U.S. military service members congregate for church services. Do they do this merely to exercise their own personal beliefs, or do they understand the connection between God and military victory? As the ancient proverb states, "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord."[34] For this reason, the discussion of ethical issues and religious beliefs among the ranks, and with civilian policy makers, is relevant. In August 2017, Secretary of Defense James Mattis reminded all Department of Defense employees to do "what is right at all times, regardless of the circumstances or whether anyone is watching."[35] In contrast, leaders who abdicate their responsibility for character development undermine combat power.

John A. Winslow and Raphael Semmes continue to speak long after their deaths. In Mobile, Alabama, a statue of Semmes pays tribute to the "commander of the most successful sea raider in history."[36] In 1894, German Emperor Wilhelm II commented on

Semmes, "In my opinion he was the greatest admiral of the nineteenth century."[37] However, like Napoleon Bonaparte, who was arguably the greatest general of the nineteenth century, Semmes suffered defeat after a period of astounding successes. But just as the Duke of Wellington will never outshine Napoleon, Winslow will never surpass the fame of Semmes.[38]

Even so, Winslow, the faithful warrior, achieved the goal he set for himself in 1833, at the young age of twenty-two. As he left his future wife upon departing on a cruise to Brazil, he shouted, "I hope I will live to be an honor to my country!"[39] Thirty years later, Winslow did just that, earning thanks from Congress, the president, and a grateful nation. Even so, despite being one of America's great warfighters, Winslow has largely faded into history. Yet it seems fitting for a man of such humble character to be forgotten in this way. In the quiet town of Forest Hills, Massachusetts, the inscription on Winslow's tombstone, a boulder from Kearsarge Mountain in nearby New Hampshire, commemorates his "memorable sea fight" in the English Channel.[40]

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[1] U.S. Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 6-22, *Army Leadership* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, August 2012), iii.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., 5.

[4] John M. Ellicott, *The Life of John Ancrum Winslow* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1902).

[5] Charles M. Robinson III, *Shark of the Confederacy: The Story of the CSS 'Alabama'* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1995), 150.

[6] Ellicott, 194.

[7] Ibid., 103.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Ibid., 260.

[10] Ibid., 102.

[11] Ibid., 112,

[12] Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1868), 761.

[13] Spencer C. Tucker, "CSS *Alabama* and Confederate Commerce Raiders During the U.S. Civil War," in *Commerce Raiding: Historical Case Studies, 1755-2009*, ed. Bruce A. Elleman and S.C.M. Paine (Newport, RI: U.S. Naval War College, 2013), 84.

[14] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 402.

[15] William Marvel, *The 'Alabama' and the 'Kearsarge:' The Sailor's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 265.

[16] Ibid., 246.

[17] U.S. Department of the Army, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-90, *Offense and Defense* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2012), 7.

[18] Craig Newton, "Inside Semmes," *Naval History* 7, no. 2 (Summer 1993).

[19] Lynnwood Cockerham, "Raphael Semmes: A Leadership Study" (Report, Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell AFB, 1986), 19.

[20] Arthur Sinclair, *Two Years on the 'Alabama'* (Lexington: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 1896), 102.

[21] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 751.

[22] Ibid., 750-51.

[23] Ibid., 751.

[24] John M. Taylor, *Confederate Raider: Raphael Semmes of the 'Alabama'* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 1994), 199.

[25] Sinclair, 7.

[26] Carl von Clausewitz, *Principles of War,* trans. and ed. Hans W. Gatzke (North Chelmsford, MA: Courier Corporation, 2012).

[27] Newton, 4.

[28] Ellicott.

[29] United States Army, *Leadership Development Handbook* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, July 2009).

[30] U.S. Army Human Resources Command, "Revised Officer Evaluation Report," 30 October 2012.

[31] Center for the Army Profession and Ethic (CAPE), Combined Arms Center, TRADOC, *The Army Profession* (Blackwell, OK: Schatz Publishing Group, October 2011), 9, 26.

[32] William Marvel, *The Alabama and the Kearsarge: The Sailor's Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 248.

[33] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 760.

[34] Proverbs 21:31.

[35] James Mattis, "Ethical Standards for All Hands" (Memorandum, Secretary of Defense. 4 August 2017), accessed 24 March 2018, https://www.defense.gov /Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Ethical-Standards-for-All-Hands-SecDef-04-Aug-17.pdf.

[36] University of South Alabama, "Historic Markers in the City of Mobile: Water Street Area," McCall Archives, accessed 19 March 2018, https://www.south alabama.edu/libraries/mccallarchives/water_markers_sub_guide.html.

[37] John M. Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2004), 108.

[38] John McIntosh Kell, *Recollections of a Naval Life* (Washington, DC: The Neale Company, 1900), 260.

[39] Ellicott, 6.

[40] Boston City Council, *Documents of the City of Boston* 4, no. 93-144 (1906): 212; and Bill Marvel, "Kearsarge," *Conway Daily Sun*, 28 June 2011, accessed 24 March 2018, http://www.bartletthistory.org/bartletthistory/kearsargearea.html.

EPILOGUE

Following the Battle of Cherbourg on 19 June 1864, Winslow pulled into port to treat the wounded, release prisoners, and make repairs to his ship. Due to the damage done to the sternpost from an unexploded round, the *Kearsarge's* rudder no longer worked properly. By 5 July, basic repairs were completed, but Winslow wrote to Welles that it would be dangerous to continue operations, especially in bad weather, due to the need for more extensive repairs.[1] Consequently, Winslow received orders to bring the ship home, although Welles directed him to search for the *Florida* while en route. This proved unnecessary after the USS *Wachusett* captured the *Florida* in October in Brazil. On the evening of 7 November, Winslow and the *Kearsarge* arrived in Boston.[2]

Three months later, Winslow began a new assignment supervising the construction of ironclads. During the war, the North built eighty-four ironclads. Of these, sixty-four were monitors, a design made popular after the USS *Monitor's* standoff against the CSS *Virginia* on 9 March 1862.[3] Winslow remained in Boston until late 1865, when relations with the French soured due to their occupation of Mexico. Secretary of State William Henry Seward selected Winslow to command the Western Gulf Squadron off Mexico.[4] However, before Winslow arrived to take command, the French reconsidered and evacuated their army in March 1867. Consequently, at the end of January 1868, Winslow returned to overseeing ironclads. A year and a half later, in June 1869, he received orders to command the Portsmouth Navy Yard in Virginia.[5]

The following year, Winslow achieved the rank of rear admiral and command of the Pacific Station. Winslow's wife and daughter accompanied him on this assignment. However, in 1872, during a cruise to South America, he fell ill. After a brief recovery, he

was stricken with constant pain in his right eye and the right side of his face and body. In Panama, he was compelled to resign his command and transferred to a mail steamer traveling to San Francisco. After a year of recovery, Winslow returned home to Boston, where he died in 1873, at the age of sixty-two.[6]

As for Semmes, after the Battle of Cherbourg, he notified the Confederate Secretary of the Navy, Stephen Mallory, that his time at sea was over, due to his health and age. While in England, he spent time visiting with a friend and joined him on a six-week trip to Europe, where they visited the Low Countries and traveled up the Rhine to the Swiss mountains. After returning to England, Semmes departed for home in October 1864 and made his way back to Alabama via Mexico. Semmes met up with his son, who was on leave from the Confederate Army, and they traveled together to Mobile.

On 2 January 1865, Semmes departed for Richmond, Virginia, and reported to Mallory and President Jefferson Davis. Both houses of Congress thanked Semmes for his services. Semmes also visited Gen. Robert E. Lee, who he had served with in the Mexican War. He shared with Lee what he had seen during his travels through the South and in Petersburg, Virginia, the two men discussed desertion, morale, and the bleak outlook of the war.[7]

In February, Mallory named Semmes a rear admiral and gave him command of the James River fleet, which protected Richmond.[8] When Richmond fell, Semmes burned his fleet of three ironclads and five wooden gunboats, and commandeered a train to evade Major General Philip Sheridan's advancing cavalry. The Union army tore up the rails only one and a half hours after Semmes used them to escape. At Danville, Virginia, Semmes became a brigadier general and converted his men into an artillery brigade. In

this assignment, he commanded about four hundred men, including one of his sons, who was a second lieutenant.

When the South surrendered in 1865, Semmes obtained a pardon. Even so, after returning home to Mobile, Welles ordered his arrest and imprisoned Semmes, first in the Washington Navy Yard and then in the Marine Barracks. In response, Semmes penned a letter of protest to President Andrew Johnson, who pardoned him again. Semmes returned to the South and died in 1877, at the age of sixty-eight, after writing another memoir.[9]

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[1] John M. Ellicott, *The Life of John Ancrum Winslow* (New York: The Knickerbocker Press, 1901), 245-46.

[2] Ibid., 259.

[3] Craig Symonds, *The Civil War at Sea* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2009), 23-28.

[4] Ellicott, 266.

[5] Ibid., 264-69.

[6] Ibid., 270-74.

[7] Raphael Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1868), 789-802.

[8] John M. Taylor, *Semmes: Rebel Raider* (Washington, DC: Brassey's, 2004), 101.

[9] Semmes, *Memoirs of Service Afloat During the War Between the States*, 815-33.

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